



THE BUDDHA'S RETURN TO HIS WIFE AND SON,
AFTER HIS ENLIGHTENMENT

Cave 17, Ajanta

In the Oriental Department of the British Museum

MY PILGRIMAGES TO AJANTA AND BAGH

By

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TO THE MEMORY OF
WILLIAM WINSTANLY PEARSON

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INTRODUCTION

THE wall paintings of Ajanta have been made the subject of elaborate and sumptuous works, such as the two folio volumes published by Mr John Griffiths in 1896-7, and the portfolio of reproductions of copies made by Lady Herringham and her assistants, published, with essays and descriptions by various hands, for the India Society, in 1915. These publications are in the hands of the scholars ; but there is room and need for a more popular book on the paintings, for they should be known to all the world. The present work, written by Mr Mukul Dey, a young Indian artist, who has himself made copies from the paintings, will do something, I hope, towards supplying that need.

It is somewhat presumptuous for one who has himself never seen the paintings to write about them. But as a matter of fact very few indeed of the English in India have ever visited the caves, and if there is any excuse for my presumption, it is that I have been for a good many years a student of the art of Asia, and of the relations between the arts of the various countries of that continent. In the art of Asia, Ajanta is one of the central monuments. It is indeed one of the great monuments in the art of the world.

In China there once existed countless frescoes on a grand scale, among them probably some of the finest paintings ever made. But all, save a few provincial specimens, have perished. All the more, therefore, must we prize the splendid series still existing at Ajanta, together with those, less known but equally

wonderful, though alas ! only a mere remnant, at Bagh.

Though known to me only through copies and photographs, these frescoes—not technically 'frescoes' in the strict sense of the term, but the word is convenient—seem more wonderful, the more they are studied. My approach to Indian art was made by way of the art of the Further East, of China and Japan ; and at first, my mind being filled with the enchantment of design, the mysterious felicity of spacing, of which the great masters of these countries had the secret, I was put out by the teeming Indian exuberance of Ajanta. But Ajanta shows many kinds of composition. Some of the paintings rather repel me still, others delight me more and more ; and I can well imagine that entering from the hot sunshine into those dim temples and gradually adapting one's eyes to the gloom, one would receive an immense, an overpowering impression of an art unmatched for its fullness, its spontaneity, its glow and diversity of living forms. Groups, lovely and animated in their natural movement and repose, single figures of strange majesty, of ineffable compassion, attract the eye and haunt the memory. One of the most unforgettable things is the group of the woman and child making offerings to the glorified Buddha, reproduced in this book from Mr Mukul Dey's copy. The group of the woman and child alone has been illustrated both in Mr Griffith's book and in the India Society's publication ; but, strange to say, with the great figure of the Buddha omitted, so that one could only guess at the motive inspiring the movement of the mother and her boy. For this alone we should owe a debt of gratitude to Mr Dey. I remember no picture anywhere more profoundly impressive in grandeur and in

tenderness. Primitive these paintings might be called, in the sense that they are unsophisticated and fresh in their attack on pictorial problems ; but what astonishing ease, what freedom from stiff, accepted formula these artists had ! They have the kind of surprising instinctive mastery, unteased and unlaboured, that a gifted child will show in rendering forms and movements.

• Mr Rothenstein, who is in peculiar sympathy with Indian art, has justly made the point that in China and Japan, Buddhism was a foreign religion and Buddhist art came to these countries with a hieratic tradition already fixed and formulated. The Chinese and Japanese masters had a secular art of their own, but in their Buddhist works employed a special style ; their paintings of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas evoke mysterious and remote presences, of strange beauty and spiritual aspect, as if appearing out of the darkness above and apart from the troubled world of men. The Ajanta paintings are all Buddhist ; are steeped in Buddhist faith and fervour ; but here the divine is not divorced from the human, nor the spirit from the body. To these Indian artists, the Buddha and his disciples were Indians, men of their own race ; they did not need to make a translation from foreign to familiar terms, as did the medieval European painters in depicting the Gospel story, in order to make the scenes intelligible. They painted a world in which their minds were at home. If you come to think of it, nearly all the religious art with which we are familiar is not in this case ; it deals with far-off events, circumscribed in surroundings, neither known nor understood save through books. The paintings of Ajanta have frequently for subject the life of the Buddha in previous incarnation — in the guise of elephant, deer or wild goose. Hence

we see pictured the actual scenes that were before the painters' eyes : the courts of princes, the throngs of servants, the musicians, the huntsmen, the dancing girls. The background of leafy nature is there ; the animals and birds have been seen and studied with as much interest as the human forms. In the paintings of Bagh—or in what little remains of them—the motives seem still more 'worldly' and gay. There is a circle of girl musicians in one of the Bagh caves, which is quite astounding in its freshness of ease and power ; it is (to judge from the drawing reproduced here, Plate LV) like a very modern painting, yet with something that our modern painting lacks.

These Indian pictures were all of religious inspiration. Probably to the artists the religious import seemed everything ; their conscious endeavour was concentrated upon that. Design, colour, composition, all the purely artistic elements of their work, were left to the more intuitive activities of the mind. From this, I think, comes the happiness of their art ; it is not self-conscious ; it solves difficult problems not by scientifically working out a theory but simply—*ambulando*. Our most modern art tortures itself in its austere quest of a purely æsthetic aim. But it is a perplexing paradox of human nature that to choose a certain aim and consciously pursue it rarely ends in perfect accomplishment of that aim ; if the aim is reached it is at the cost of impoverishment.

If one were asked to put into one word the secret of these paintings—the secret of their continuing power to impress and charm us—one might well answer *life* ; for they affect us in the same way that the living movements of men and women, children, and animals affect us : with a deep content and unconscious sympathy. And it is not merely a sort of extract from life that they

yield—a mood of pleasure, a mood of sadness or bitterness, a mood of devotion or a mood of frivolity—it is just life itself, all life, with its joyous impulses of body and spirit, the forward stride of adventure, the haltings of the mind and turns upon itself, its abandonment to sorrow, its renunciations, its victories. The fruit of Buddhist doctrine, it seems, is not negation but an experience of what Professor Anesaki, in his interpretation of Buddhist art, calls 'The Communion of Life', which is the escaping from the prison and pain of self.

The cave-temples of Ajanta, as the reader will realize from Mr Mukul Dey's vivid account of his pilgrimage thither, are not easy of access, and present all sorts of discomorts and even dangers—from tigers and the stings of wild bees—as a sort of trial and initiation. I am glad that even millionaires cannot charm away these obstacles ; they too must submit to this test of the reality of their desire to see these famous works. Perhaps it were well that other great works of art were guarded in some such manner from the impertinent patronage of the profane.

Mr Dey went to Ajanta and Bagh in the spirit of a pilgrim. He is one of those Indians who seek to revive the art of India in the Indian spirit. And it is to Ajanta that the modern Indian artist rightly turns, or should turn, for there is nothing really antiquated in those frescoes, they still radiate life ; they show what the Indian genius could achieve on a grand scale in the past, and may achieve again. Indians in general take far too little interest in their own art, whether ancient or contemporary. They should realize that through painting and sculpture, in which mankind instinctively embodies its deepest thoughts and ideals, a race speaks to the world in a language needing no translation.

All over the world is a newly-stirred curiosity and interest in the art of India. We look to Indians to honour their art and their artists ; to cherish the great monuments of the past and to foster the gifts of the living ; for art, if it is to enjoy the fullness and glory of expression, needs the co-operation of the whole people out of which it comes.

LAURENCE BINYON

AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

I CAN never forget the help of those friends whose names have already been mentioned in the first edition.

I express my grateful thanks again to the various friends who have helped me in different ways in preparing this book.

I would particularly mention here that the late Sir Akbar Hydari, a high official of the Government of His Exalted Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad, very kindly granted me permission to copy the wall-paintings at Ajanta caves, when I visited them for the second time, nearly thirty years ago. In this connexion, I would also like to mention the name of Mr Ghulam Yazdani, late Director of the Archæological Department of the same State. The Director of Archæology to His Highness the Maharaja of Gwalior also permitted me to publish some of their photographs and reproductions of the sculptures and paintings at the Bagh caves and my friend Mr Sarkis Kachadourian kindly allowed me to use a photograph of his copy of the fresco at Bagh. Mr F. J. P. Richter, the Honorary Secretary of The Royal India Society, London, most kindly allowed me to make use of the photographs of the frescoes at Ajanta caves, copied by the well-known English artists, the late Lady Herringham and her assistant, Miss Dorothy Larcher. I am indebted to the late Dr Anand K. Coomaraswamy, Keeper of Indian and Muhammadan Art in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, U.S.A., for so kindly supplying me with a photograph of a fresco fragment from one of the Ajanta caves, which is now in the possession of the Boston Museum in America.

To those friends who spared no pains in revising this book or have been a constant source of inspiration, my sincerest thanks are due : Gurudeva's son, Mr Rathindranath Tagore, Director, Rabindra-Bharati, Silpa-Guru Dr Abanindranath Tagore, Dr and Mrs Stanley J. G. Nairn, Mr Hanuman Prasad Poddar, Dr Bimala Chaturi Law, Dr Hazari Prasad Dwivedi, Professor Jnanendranath Chattopadhyaya, Mr Sukumar Das Gupta, Professor Tan Yun-Shan, Director, China-Rishvana of Visva-Bharati, Santiniketan, and his colleague Dr Purusottam Vishvanath Bapat, Mr Bimal Kumar Dutta, Miss Nalini Sukhtankar, Mr Tapan-mohar Chatterji and Mr Surendranath Kar—esteemed friends from my boyhood days. My thanks are also due to the staff of the Calcutta Branch of the Oxford University Press. My wife Bina Devi and our young daughter Manjari, with whom I visited these art shrines all over India and Ceylon during recent years, were overwhelmed with their ethereal beauty and grandeur. They also felt the same thrill as I myself did when I visited the scene of this vast wealth of ancient art treasures.

Acknowledgement would be incomplete if I did not mention the name of my teacher and great well-wisher, Sir Muirhead Bone, from whom—apart from the inspiration derived—I received wholesome influence which benefited me beyond all measure in my art career for over thirty years and without whose encouragement this book would never have come out in its second edition.

Chitralékha

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AUTHOR'S PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

How can I sufficiently express my gratitude to the friends who helped me write this book?

Within the sacred rock-temples of Ajanta and Bagh abide in darkness and neglect gods and goddesses; Buddhas and monks; kings and queens; courtiers and hunters; musicians and dancing girls; animals and flowers.

Two thousand years ago they were carved in the rock or painted on the wall. Every day as dusk approaches, the rays of the dying sun penetrate the caverns for a brief while. The figures in the carvings and the frescoes flush into a semblance of life, the mighty sun—the source of all vitality—reminds them that he at least has not forgotten them.

Even so to me, working and ransacking memories in this cold and foggy climate of England, in a shelter by a hot fire-side, hard put to it sometimes to keep body and soul alive, the kindness of my friends has come like the sovereign touch of the sun to the darkness at Ajanta, and has warmed my heart and revived many scenes and incidents.

My grateful thanks are due to Mr Kallianjee Curumsey, of Bombay, who owns the copies of the wall-paintings which I made in the caves and has taken immense trouble in sending them to England in order that they might be reproduced for this book.

My heartfelt acknowledgements are also owing to Messrs Johnston & Hoffmann, of Calcutta; to Dr F. W. Thomas, the librarian of the Indian Office, for his valuable assistance; to Mr F. J. P. Richter, the Honorary Secretary of The Royal India Society; to all who gave

me permission to make use of the photographs of the caves and frescoes and particularly some of Lady Herringham's copies of works at the Ajanta caves.

I am also indebted to the book of James Fergusson and Dr Burgess on the *Cave Temples of India*, from which I have taken some valuable information.

To friends who not only encouraged me in various ways in my effort but patiently endeavoured to put my wild English into some sort of shape, my sincerest thanks are due : Mr Laurence Binyon, Miss Eve Maggs, Mr and Mrs Louis F. Fergusson, Professor Selwyn Image, Mr Thomas Sturge Moore, the Misses Dorothy Larcher, Elsie Maggs, Ida A. R. Wylie, Rachel Barrett, Mr Eddie Whaley, Mr Henry Clifford Maggs, Mr and Mrs Muirhead Bone, Mr Lionel G. Pearson, Mr and Mrs Eliot Druce, Mr and Mrs A. R. Smith, and my great brother artists, Srijukta Nanda Lal Basu and Surendra Nath Kar.

On many occasions during this literary voyage the seas have been rough, though at other times I sailed with winds that favoured my course. Almost within sight of the coast towards which my hopes were directed my vessel ran aground in shallow waters. On an early autumn morning while I despaired two pilots came aboard and steered my little ship to safety, and soon I perceived the faint black line of the shore through the mist. To these pilots, Miss Elsie M. C. Druce and Mr W. E. 'Pussyfoot' Johnson, my heart overflows with gratitude, for without them I could never have reached the harbour.

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Chapter One

MY FIRST PILGRIMAGE TO AJANTA

IN Western India, in the heart of the desolate Vindhya Hills in the State of Hyderabad, there exists a shrine of religion and art which from time immemorial has attracted pilgrims and students, in spite of its remoteness. This shrine consists of the Ajanta caves and the wealth of ancient art and architecture with which they abound.

Even when a young boy art fascinated me, and I was ever hearing about these famous caves and of their marvellous frescoes and wall-paintings. Even then I determined that one day I would visit them myself, and begin what I hoped would be the study of the art-work of all nationalities.

Leaving Santiniketan school near Bolpur where I studied, I thought many a time of making a journey to Ajanta ; but when I expressed this desire to my friends I met with little encouragement. They laughed at the project and warned me of perils from robbers and thieves which I should encounter on the way and in the jungles. They frightened me with tales of tigers and snakes, of cholera and plague—nay, they mentioned starvation too, as there would be great difficulty in procuring food in a dry forsaken land amongst the poverty-stricken villagers.

I was a young artist, and I had not enough money with which to carry out my ideas for this long journey of over a thousand miles from my home in Bengal. But I did not give up my ambition ; I kept it before me steadily for many years. Though a young artist, I was able to earn a little money, and I set about selling my

drawings and etchings for small sums, till by the end of the year 1917 I had saved about two hundred and fifty rupees, roughly about twenty pounds. I then set out for the caves alone, my luggage consisting of an attaché case, a few drawing materials and necessaries, and a blanket under my arm. Third-class travel in India 'is cheap.' A third-class ticket from Howrah



MAP OF CENTRAL INDIA, SHOWING AJANTA AND BAGH

station, Calcutta, to Jalgaon station by the Bengal-Nagpur Railway, a distance of about a thousand miles, cost me just over one pound.

From Howrah station in Calcutta the train went through typical Bengali villages of thatched cottages, with banana trees growing in clusters, and acres of bamboo, and over all these the betel-nut trees nodding their heads. Tiny ancient ponds, covered with thick vegetation, in which the ducks were busy seeking food were on every hand. Steps of old brick led down to the water. All along the line children playing in the roads stopped to gaze at our train. On we sped through

shadowy green villages with their coconut and mango groves, and the bright red sun was setting as we entered the flat rice fields, dotted here and there with a few dark trees sharply silhouetted against the flaming sky. I sat at the window of my compartment, gazing out and enjoying the scenery through which the train was passing.

I was travelling in the third-class compartment for Europeans. In those days the Indian railways provided such accommodation without any additional fee for reservation, but any person in European costume could use it. I occupied a whole bunk for my night's sleep in comfort.

There was one other man in my compartment ; what his nationality was I could not guess, but he told me he was a dealer in Oriental and Egyptian antiques, had a shop in Calcutta, and was going on a short business visit to Bombay. We soon became friends, and he showed me a few objects of virtue he had with him in his trunk, especially some Persian handbags, which were richly embroidered in gold, red and green. Amongst his treasures I found an old Egyptian seal of red stone dating from the seventh to fifth centuries B.C. He was delighted to sell this to me for only two or three rupees, and it was constantly with me, until in London I thought I would have it mounted as a ring, but, alas, the jeweller to whom I took it broke the stone.

Next day, on our arrival at Nagpur, an altogether strange sight met my eyes. The platform and the approach to the station were swarming with orange-sellers, who had baskets heaped up with oranges on their heads, shoulders, and in their hands, all the time shouting and running from carriage to carriage. Every one buys oranges at Nagpur. For a rupee one could

get thirty or forty of the large sweet ones. It was really beautiful to see this lovely fruit in such profusion, and I hastened to buy some for myself.

The mail train does not stop for long at any station on the way, but here it stopped for half an hour. Though I was travelling in a European compartment in coat and trousers, I carried with me a folding Indian cap, at present called the Gandhi cap, which I hardly ever wore except when in the cities. I was careful not to make use of it in the train. Whenever the train stopped at a station the Eurasian and Anglo-Indian passengers, of whom there were four or five, put on their soka topees to guard the door against any native intruder.

But now at the last moment a dark, middle-aged Maratha gentleman wearing a large turban on his head, with his wife, followed by a coolie with bundles of luggage, hurriedly entered our compartment. Two of my travelling companions tried to prevent their entry ; but the newcomer was very strong and energetic, and, by dint of a certain amount of force, successfully stormed the stronghold and occupied a seat, asking his wife in the Marathi language not to budge an inch whatever happened. I knew what he meant, and kept quiet, wondering what would happen next. Then two of the Anglo-Indians left the train and reported matters to the stationmaster and the guard. These officials duly appeared ; the guard a European, the stationmaster an Indian. They advised the newcomers to leave the carriage, promising to find them seats in another part of the train. But the husband was adamant : ' I'm not going to move from my seat. You can do whatever you like. I know the rules all right, and I know a case like this happened before, and it went up to the High

Court in Bombay. 'So I know what I am doing because I am a lawyer!' By that time a small crowd had gathered, and a policeman arrived on the spot. I was enjoying the fun, and watched with excitement to see who would win. But time was up, the train could not wait any longer, and nothing could be done. The guard whistled and waved his green flag, the train started, the stationmaster quietly grumbled to himself, and the crowd on the platform gave us a rousing cheer. The intruders were left victoriously in possession, looking immensely pleased with themselves. Theirs was not a long journey, however, and by nightfall they had reached their destination.

It was a cold, wintry January month of 1918, and particularly cold in that part of Western India. As it grew very bitter during the night I took my rug out of the parcel and wrapped myself up in it. The train ultimately arrived at Jalgaon, then the nearest railway station for the caves, at half past two of a pitch dark night. The distance travelled from Calcutta had been nine hundred and sixty-two miles. As I had not much luggage with me I inquired of one of the station porters whether I could get a 'tanga' to start for the Ajanta caves at once. The tanga is a small carriage drawn by a country horse.

The people of this part are mostly Marathas, and they speak only their own language, Marathi. Besides Bengali I could speak a little Hindustani, and somehow I made my porter understand my desire; but he asked me to wait for the morning light, assuring me that I should get a conveyance in time. Being impatient, however, I went to the stationmaster and spoke to him. He confirmed what the porter had told me, adding that if the tourists and visitors intending to see

these caves would inform him of the *mamlatdar* (village headman, locally called *patel*) beforehand, the right kind of tanga could be kept ready engaged. Some of the rich tourists bring their own motor cars with them and do the journey to the caves in an hour or two ; I had to wait patiently until morning broke.

My old porter pointed out to me a group of men chatting round a fire outside the station, as they waited for daybreak ; these were the tanga-men. One of them agreed to take me over for twenty-six rupees, which was more than I had paid to the railway to come up to Jalgaon from Calcutta. Before it was dawn we started off for the caves. This being my first tour in Western India, I noticed a good deal of difference in the scenery as the eastern sky lightened up, gradually revealing landscapes new to me. The villagers were not yet awake, but very soon a few people appeared here and there on the road, crossing from one side to the other, washing themselves, or going to work. They wore coloured turbans, especially red, like yards of thick rope wound round their heads.

The houses in the villages were also quite different from those in Bengal. They were squat constructions, built of stone, brick and mud, with angular roofs covered decoratively with black and red tiles ; the Bengal huts on the other hand have thatched roofs, which hunch like the backs of frightened cats, and the plain mud walls look pleasant among the masses of green vegetation. On my left were some Hindu temples (in style derived from the type of Buddh-Gaya) with beautiful round carvings on the top. It was a cold but very refreshing morning, and I wrapped myself up in my rug in the tanga.

As we were going slowly through the small town of

Jalgaon (which has since grown considerably), I saw a woman carrying milk on her head, and pouring it out into pots at the doors of some of the houses along the road ; I inquired of my tanga driver whether I could get a glass of milk to drink. He replied, 'Yes, if you wish'. He called the milkmaid who came along asking, 'But how will you drink ?' I took out my folding glass, which I had bought in America and brought out with me. She was greatly surprised. She was a handsome young woman, wearing long, delicate ear-rings, a rich red *choli* on which tiny pieces of mirror sparkled in the sunshine, and a coloured skirt of innumerable folds. She was very lovely indeed, and reminded me of the old legend of Radha of Brindavana and the Gopi girls, her milkmaid companions. After drinking the milk I looked about for my small camera, intending to take a photograph of her, but she ran away, saying that she had much to do before the other people woke up, and that later she would have to go with the rest to work in the cotton fields.

By this time we had reached the end of the small town, and the tanga-man suddenly stopped the cart, got down from his seat and disappeared. But he soon came back, carrying a load of straw and corn for his horse and some food for himself. He said to me, 'You will also get something to eat later on in some village on the way'.

The sun had risen and was shining radiantly as we started up the lonely road at the rate of three or four miles an hour. This, in the modern age of swift motor cars, must appear rather slow progress, but those sturdy little horses of the tanga will cover as much as thirty or forty miles in a day at this leisurely pace. The road was quite good, broad, and bordered on either side with

numerous nim, banyan, peepul, acacia and mimosa trees.

The tanga is a funny kind of carriage. Drawn only by a small pony it has remained unchanged through the ages. The passenger has to sit behind the driver in a sort of box which protects both from falling out as the tanga jolts along or takes sharp corners over the hills and downs. It is two-wheeled, like the bullock cart ; but the wheels have iron bands, and there are no springs. As it runs it makes a terrible noise ; one can neither speak nor hear, and soon a pain spreads over the body. In this way we traversed the villages and ghats, as roads up a steep incline are called in the Marathi dialect.

By about ten in the morning we arrived at a village called Neri, which stands on a beautiful little river of the same name. Here the women were cleaning their brass and copper jars before filling them with water. We crossed the river at the little ford, and arrived at a gateway of the ancient wall which surrounds the village. Probably it was in older days an old Marathi fort.

There are houses built on this wall—of old Hindu architectural design with beautiful carved doors and balconies ; and there are numbers of Hindu temples on it. While crossing the river I heard that there was a bazaar where I could buy some food ; but when we arrived at the village I observed that almost all the doors were shut, only starving stray dogs were moving about, and the whole place was deserted. There had been a plague scare, and all the inhabitants had fled. It was a good thing I had had my glass of milk from the girl at Jalgaon.

While passing through this deserted village I noticed beautiful carvings and decorative designs on the wooden doors and by the steps leading to the temples and houses,

as well as perforated and carved windows on the balconies. It was sad to see this charming village with all the houses locked up and abandoned and wearing such an air of desolation, in spite of the glorious sunshine.

Leaving the village, we found ourselves in the country and, to my amazement, we came upon hundreds of tiny huts clumsily made of leaves and grass, all huddled together about a couple of hundred yards from the road. These housed the inhabitants who had fled from the village with their women, children and cattle.

After we left Neri, the farther we went the barer became the land. There was hardly a stick of vegetation visible anywhere, and the whole ground was a rich golden-brown tint. The road here was very lonely, but occasionally one met a few weary travellers and some squeaking bullock carts laden with cotton, hay or wood, creeping slowly along. In the distance could be seen some straggling villages consisting for the most part of but a few huts each. These huts looked as if they had been built of solid blocks of clay, their roofs, flat and low, looking like saucepan lids.

This road to the south is one of the ancient highways of India and, in my imagination, I could see the countless hordes of Aryans and armed Pathans and Moghul invaders passing this way to the conquest of Southern India. Most stirring of all to me, however, was the thought of the great stream of Buddhist pilgrims, not only from India but from far-off Tibet and China, to whom this road had been the only way to the sacred Ajanta caves. It thrilled me to realize that I too was one of this unending procession, and to believe that unending processions would still follow me. All along the road we were continually startling herds of black

buck and deer which fled on our approach, while wild doves rose in pairs from the ground.

At last we saw on the horizon the long blue ranges of the Vindhya Hills of the Deccan, and my tanga-man pointed out, 'The caves are there in the midst of those hills'. Through this district we crossed and recrossed a river called the Baghora, which has its source in the hills in which the Ajanta caves lie. The small village of Fardapur was not very far. At last, just before sunset, we arrived there. Beyond this small village could be seen to our right the little dak-bungalow where my tanga-man wanted me to go, but I insisted that he should take me first to the caves. I could not bear any delay, even for food or rest, as I was almost feverish to have a glimpse of the place of my pilgrimage. The driver told me that he could not do this, as the hilly road would shortly become very difficult and the pony could not go much farther.

Soon we came to a point where the road descended to the river, sprinkled with boulders and impossible for the tanga to cross. So I paid the driver off and proceeded on foot to the caves. On my way I came across a small white tent occupied by some officials. One of them told me that it was too late to visit the caves; but I did not listen to his advice and continued my walk.

I made my way over the jungle road, now leaping from boulder to boulder, now treading my way cautiously through the tangled undergrowth of dense vegetation. Some of these boulders are marked with a bright vermilion splash, or a roughly-drawn figure, which are objects of devotion to the neighbouring Hindu hill-tribes. Around the black boulders grew some *mowah* trees and *hara-singar* or *sephali* flowering shrubs, and other plants which I could not recognize. Evening



THE AJANTA GORGE
SHOWING CAVE 26



GENERAL VIEW OF AJANTA CAVES
SHOWING CAVES 1 TO 13

was closing in, all was silent as the grave but for the rustling noise caused by the little night birds and animals who keep awake at that hour for their nocturnal wanderings. Suddenly I heard distinctly the sound of marching footsteps which seemed to be approaching me. From afar I saw a band of about half a dozen people marching in single file ; they proved to be Japanese, wearing tight leggings, a peculiar white dress and white sola topees. Amongst them was my old friend Mr Kampo Arai, a well-known Japanese artist of Tokyo, whom I had previously met in Japan in 1916. He was very much astonished to see me alone, and wondered how had I got there ! He asked me a few questions and at once introduced me to Mr Sawamura, who was Professor of Oriental Art at Kyoto Imperial University in Japan. Then he asked me whether I should like to join their party as it was getting rather late, but I said, ' No ; I would like to see the caves first. I have travelled all this long, long way to see the caves and I must have a glimpse of them before I do anything else.'

I asked him for a few directions : how far the caves were ; which was the best road to pursue and so forth. He said, briefly, ' All right, I had better come along with you ' for being an artist himself, he understood my feelings. After all, the caves were not very far, and crossing the same river Baghara twice again, Kampo Arai took me through a short cut and said, ' You will soon see them now '.

It is impossible for me to make my reader realize my feelings when I first came upon the site of the caves. I was spellbound. The natural splendour of the scene, its utter seclusion, the amphitheatre of hills enclosing the glen with a rugged rampart shaped like a crescent moon, the little murmuring stream which flowed so

swiftly but gently through a landscape of such wild grandeur—all affected me deeply. As I looked more closely I perceived that out of the stone, which was of a glorious tinge of bluish-mauve, had been hewn richly-carved arches and columns, and that these formed the entrance to a series of cave-temples far surpassing in beauty all that I had imagined. My companion and I remained for long in silent ecstasy. I felt completely satisfied and a sense of profound peace crept through my soul. Just this one vision repaid all the troubles of my journey a thousandfold.

All the way back to the dak-bungalow I talked to my friend of the magnificence of the things I had seen. Meanwhile, I could hear the monkeys chattering, and saw them leaping and playing together high up on the side of the hills. My artist friend agreed with me, and said that it was the greatest and most wonderful thing he had ever seen in his life, and he thought he was lucky to be able to remain there for some time, copying the frescoes. He said to me later on : ' We have only one little room in the bungalow for ourselves, but we will manage to squeeze you in, and you will have your meals with us.' I was most lucky to get this welcome invitation, which I at once very gratefully accepted. As soon as we arrived at the bungalow my friend introduced me again—in proper Japanese style, bowing several times—to his friend, Professor Sentaro Sawamura, the leader of the party, and to all the other artists, who had come from distant Japan to copy the world-famous frescoes at Ajanta.

There were five or six of them sleeping in one room and, seeing the difficulty of accommodating an additional person, I tucked myself away in a little lean-to by the side of the room. I had a cot or *char-paya* (a bed

covered with woven rope) which they had managed to borrow from the servants, and Arai-san gave me one of his extra blankets, to which I added my own, and my attaché case served for a pillow. Thus my bed was made. There were only two rooms in this bungalow, and the second one was occupied by two other Japanese artists belonging to quite a different organization, who had also come at the same time, on their own account, to copy some of the frescoes. Professor Sawamura could speak English, but none of the others could, except Arai-san who knew just a few words. However, by dumb show and signs we succeeded in making ourselves understood by one another.

After a whole day's journey in the hot sun, in a jolting tanga without meals, I was naturally very hungry and thirsty, and I rejoiced at having my rice with tea-water, and was very grateful for whatever they did for me. We soon hastened to bed and, thanking them all, I heartily wished them a good night. Professor Sawamura said, 'We hope to see you all right tomorrow morning'. Arai-san asked me to close my window tight, as the tigers, leopards and panthers were in the habit of wandering into the bungalow compound during the night.

Chapter Two

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE AJANTA CAVES

EARLY next morning after a hurried breakfast consisting of rice and tea and a raw egg, we all set out for the caves. The sun was shining gloriously ; the day, however, was still cool. Talking to my Japanese friends as we trudged along, I learnt that the caves were about four miles south-west of the bungalow which we were occupying. The village Fardapur is the first frontier village of H.E.H. the Nizam's dominions ; Ajanta is something like an old fort-village (called 'Ajantaghats'), lying north-west of Aurangabad, situated on the top of the 'Vindhya Hills,' which divide the province of Khandesh from the 'Deccan.' The population consists chiefly of Mussalmahs and Hindus, who through many generations have lived amicably side by side. The village of Ajanta, being larger and more important than Fardapur, has given its name to the caves, and is now famous throughout the world for its wealth of art treasures.

It is interesting to know how the caves, having lain hidden for about a thousand years, were rediscovered over a century ago, and revealed to the world. In the year 1819 a British officer, retired from the Madras Army, was out alone in the jungles close to the village of Ajanta on a hunting expedition. Unsuccessful, he wound his way on and on through the wild stony tracks. Having pursued his haphazard course for some time, and, imagining himself far enough from human beings, he was surprised to hear 'but a little way off the shrill

voice of a boy. Hastening his steps, the captain soon came up to a young person talking to his herd of half-wild buffaloes in the middle of the jungles.

The boy, seeing a European and consequently hoping to earn a little tip by showing him the actual home of the tigers, led him a little way from where he was standing and, pointing through the trees, said, 'Look, Sahib'. Eagerly looking in the direction of the boy's extended arm, he saw through the thick green foliage something, a little golden-red in colour, peering between a few mauve-coloured stone carved pillars or columns.

The captain, intensely excited, feeling that he was on the brink of making an important archaeological discovery, sent immediately to the village for men to come with torches and drums, with axes and spears, to hew down the tangled clusters that had throttled the entrance to the caves. Thus a clearing was made in the jungle, and a passage forced into these long-forgotten cave-temples which had been hewn out of solid rock between the third century B.C. and the seventh century A.D.

We were following a rough and narrow track, passing little valleys in which one might have found many a spot most suitable and convenient for pitching a tent amidst magnificent scenery ; most suitable, that is, if one disregards the nightly visits of snakes and panthers. Clambering over rough boulders and jumping across little water-courses, we made our way towards the caves as hurriedly as the uncertain route permitted. Having crossed and recrossed the constantly winding little rivulet Baghora five times, we arrived at the foot of the ancient stone steps leading to the caves.

The Japanese artists always used this ancient ascent to the caves rather than the modern short cut from the

eastern side, which led somewhat steeply to cave 1 in the series, which must have been the last to be constructed.

After ascending about a hundred of these worn and broken steps we came to the cave marked 7, the numeral glaringly conspicuous in black tar within a white square, just a 'soulless identification mark, quite inappropriate for the age or nature of these cave-temples. About fifty years ago the official surveyors had numbered these caves from east to west, like houses or shops in a street.

My artist friends now scattered themselves in different caves for work ; but I followed the leading artist, Arai-san, who had been copying a great piece of fresco 'The Temptation of the Buddha', in cave 1. We passed caves 6, 5, and so on till we came to 1; when suddenly Arai-san took off his hat and stood reverently in front of the intensely dark entrance. Instead of going straight to the figure of the Buddha at the far end of the vihara hall, he walked slowly up the left aisle, gazing at the frescoes high up on the walls ; and, having come at last to the altar, he bowed many times to the statue of the Buddha seated cross-legged, carved out of solid rock. He then took off his puttees, and by undoing his sash let down his long white robe, so that he now looked like an artist-monk.

All this time we had been appearing to one another like ghosts in the subdued light, but suddenly Arai-san said, 'Now light,' and began to pump air into a large cylinder which was connected with a lamp hanging from a tall three-legged stand. He lit this lamp, and I joined in pumping for half an hour or so, in order to get a bright flame. Gradually the wall-paintings of the great Buddha and the Mara became more clearly

visible, and as the flame increased I saw the figures which Arai-san had been copying.

I was rapturously happy when I saw the paintings on the walls. They must have been done by great masters with the utmost care and devotion. I felt a new spirit leaping up within me, an enthusiasm, a hope, that I too could cover walls with similar pictures all by myself. I felt a peculiar yearning towards many of the paintings—I might as well say towards all of them—the beautiful figures, particularly of those divinely lovely women. I cherish the same feelings even now.

Over the famous fresco of 'The Temptation of the Buddha' hung four or five pieces of thin Japanese drawing paper which, later on, the artist would join together upon a large wooden-framed stretcher. For a little while I watched him at his work, then stole away, eager to see the other wonders.

Wandering from cave to cave, I found myself in the bygone world of Buddhist palaces, temples and halls. The walls, ceilings and columns were covered with paintings and decorations wonderful to behold. All ideas of ordinary natural caves in jungles vanished from my mind altogether, and I was transported to a world of exquisite beauty which can only be felt but not described.

The great Buddhist emperor Asoka was a tremendous builder and by his orders about 84,000 stupas, pillars and monuments were built, and inscriptions carved, throughout the whole of India in the space of three years. At Ajanta there are twenty-nine cave-temples in all, hewn out of a solid scarp of rock some 300 feet high. These marvellous temples and monasteries probably date from a little before the reign of Asoka (273-232 B.C.) to just before the decline of Buddhism in India, about A.D. 700.

During 'Asoka's time, Buddhism spread to many countries, such as Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Annam, Cambodia, Malay Peninsula and the islands of the East Indies ; in the West, Afghanistan, Persia, Babylon, Arabia, Egypt, Syria, Asia Minor, and Greece ; in the north-east, Tibet, China, Nepal, Bhutan, Korea, Japan, and then crossing the Behring Strait, the daring Buddhist missionaries went up to North and South America two thousand years ago. Now more than one-third of the whole world-population is still Buddhist or under Buddhist influence.

The caves were visited by generations of pious travellers and pilgrims, not only from Persia, Greece and Asia Minor, but also from the distant regions of China and Tibet. Fa-Hien went there in A.D. 398 before his return to China in A.D. 406. Yuan Chwang travelled over India in the years A.D. 629 to 645 and visited the Ajanta caves in the year 638. They came here on a pilgrimage with hearts full of devotion, bringing with them offerings of precious gifts.

Out of the twenty-nine caves at Ajanta there are only four completed chaityas or chapels, in caves 9, 10, 19, and 26 ; and one, 28, had been begun, but was not finished. The word 'chaitya' means a building used by Buddhist monks for congregational worship. A dome-shaped Buddhist shrine, called the 'stupa', containing the relics, occupies the place of the altar in each of the four chaityas at Ajanta, and is considered to be the most sacred of all.

The remaining twenty-five caves are viharas. 'Vihara' means a Buddhist monastery and the modern province of Bihar derives its name from the number of viharas it contained. The vihara consists of a central hall with small cells opening into it and a sanctuary

on its longest side, just opposite the main entrance, with pillared aisles, nave, veranda and cells. This sanctuary contains a colossal statue of the Buddha in stone. Seven of the rock-cut temples at Ajanta were never finished ; they are numbered 3, 14, 23, 24, 27, 28, and 29.

About the time of Asoka, between the third and second century B.C., the first two caves, 10 and 9, were excavated. These were chapels for worship, or 'chaityas'. But living quarters were needed for the priests, monks, students and devotees and so caves 7, 8, 11, 12, and 13 were gradually cut out one by one, and the monasteries built up. What is remarkable is that all these caves were cut out of one solid piece of rock.

The halls and chapels were made for the purpose of housing Buddhist universities and monasteries where pilgrims and scholars might live and study art, religion and philosophy. Devotees from distant lands, such as North-West Asia and China, also came there to worship the Buddha. The pictures and sculptures adorning the caves are mostly connected with, and illustrative of the Buddha's life and of his various previous incarnations which are recorded in Jataka tales ; but stories from the *Ramayana* and elsewhere are sometimes illustrated.

It is impossible for anyone who has not seen them with his own eyes to realize how great and solid the paintings in the caves are ; how wonderful in their simplicity and religious fervour, though almost all of them have suffered damage of some kind or other, apart from the inevitable decay due to some thousand years of neglect. Numerous varieties of animals and birds—bats, owls, swallows, wild bees, and even wild parrots and pigeons—had made their homes in these caves and had continually dropped their lime over the walls on the paintings. For years in the past, human beings, civilized and uncivilized,

sadhus and sanyasis, have cooked their meals on fires made inside these caves; till the smoke has blackened the walls. Visitors have scratched and scribbled their names, and many of them have cut away pieces of the frescoes or have left marks of having tried to do so. An interesting fragment of fresco (Plate V), possibly from cave 16, about one foot square, showing portions of various figures, apparently part of a Jataka scene dating about the fifth century A.D., was removed and carried away to England by the late Captain Williams of Hampstead. In 1922 this very piece was put up for auction at Sotheby's sale rooms in New Bond Street, London, where it fetched £1,000. It is now in the Museum of Fine Arts at Boston, U.S.A., and I was glad to see it in a good home after so many vicissitudes. It is sad to see how the frescoes have been damaged everywhere by the hands of man; the disfiguring marks of pen-knives are all too visible. From time to time artists who were engaged in copying the frescoes smeared them with a cheap kind of varnish, and as a result the paintings have turned darker and darker day by day, almost to the point of a dead black and utter ruination; for when the varnish dried up the clay plaster on the walls cracked and the outer film of the paintings peeled off. Further, on every inch of the wall-paintings diverse kinds of insects have bored into the plaster, and have also bitten off the colouring at places.

The preservation of these paintings requires almost as much care and devotion as was bestowed upon them by the artist-monks who created them. Deep regret filled my mind when I noticed on a later and more recent visit to these caves that the work of preservation had been given to people who did not know their work and who were doing immense harm to the paintings.



in their ignorance. The holes were being filled with plaster of Paris, and palette knives were being used carelessly to make the surface of the patches even, damaging the figures of the frescoes. Again, further damage was being done in the process of washing off the plaster with water. The ground of clay on which the frescoes are painted was being soaked in water and was crumbling off the walls. None but expert artists knowing this kind of work should be entrusted with the preservation of these paintings.

Formerly, a visitor to these caves felt badly handicapped for the want of a suitable guide to explain the paintings and the different works of art. The caves cannot be seen properly except with the help of artificial light, and unless a visitor had a powerful lamp or torch of his own he had to return without seeing much of the treasures there. The gratitude of visitors is now due to the authorities who have made good both these wants. A good guide is there to take the visitors round, and petrol lamps or electric lights can be hired at the small cost of five rupees per hour.

From about eight o'clock in the morning until evening I saw these Japanese artists keenly absorbed in making the most faithful records of the frescoes for their own country, and Professor Sawamura was busily engaged in taking photographs and drawing plans. He also took hundreds of impressions of the carvings and decorative designs of the columns and pillars on specially made thin Japanese art paper, which he damped and pressed down on the carved designs with a soft dabber ; he then applied black ink on the surface so that it took the exact impression of the models. I helped him at this work many times as a token of my



appreciation of his and his friends' kind hospitality. Later on I heard from Professor Sawamura that all the copies of Ajanta paintings made by them had been destroyed in a severe earthquake in Japan: only his own collection of impressions of the carvings had escaped and were preserved at the Kyoto University.

The 'scenery everywhere round about here looked wild but was very beautiful. From the veranda of cave 17 you can look down upon the river bed, which curves away to the waterfalls to the extreme end of the right-hand corner of the caves, and which in the monsoon becomes a mighty torrent. It runs from the head of the valley above these caves and terminates abruptly in a waterfall of seven leaps, the last being about seventy feet. The place is known locally as 'Sat-kund', or the seven pools which receive the several falls, the lowest being a small but deep lake, full of fish.

The Japanese artists, 'Buddhists' in their religion, were so devotedly busy in copying what they saw and were so engrossed in their task that I never heard them produce even a murmur sound while they were at work, and I felt sorry that I was not able to start working myself as I had not yet obtained permission from H.E.H. the Nizam's Government to copy the frescoes. After seeing these magnificent paintings and noticing how Japanese artists were making faithful copies of them for their own country, and how their Government and art patrons had equipped them, I contemplated how other countries have taken such great interest in these unsurpassable relics of our ancient art and culture. I thought that probably in the near future we should have to go elsewhere to study our own ancient art instead of being able, as one should, to study it at home in India; for so quickly is it becoming ruined,

that we shall lose it all sooner or later ; I therefore thought that I must copy some of these glorious paintings before they were all gone. I soon realized, however, that it was a big and very difficult task to fulfil, and, as I had discovered, one in which few, if any, were likely to help me. I made up my mind to have sufficient funds to carry out my scheme, and to come back to the caves again for a long stay for the purpose of copying the frescoes.

With these ideas formed, one morning I bade 'Sayonara', Good-bye, to my Japanese artist friends and left the Ajanta caves.

Chapter Three

THE LIFE OF THE PRINCE GAUTAMA BUDDHA

FOR the next two years I travelled over the greater part of India, visiting temples and shrines at Patna, Nalanda, Rajagriha in the north ; the Sanchi Stupa in Bhopal ; Aurangabad, Daulatabad, Ellora, Nasik ; Elephanta in Bombay ; Karle near Poona ; Goa in the west ; Puri, Bhubaneswar, Konarak in the east, and as far south as Madras, Pondicherry, Bangalore, Mysore and Negapattam on the coast of Coromandel in South India, studying ancient art and monuments. During this time I also visited the Mahabodhi temple at Buddh-Gaya, where the Buddha received Enlightenment after forty days of deep meditation beneath an old Bodhi tree at Uruvela. This temple was built by Emperor Asoka, with the throne of the Buddha within and the branches of the sacred 'Ashvaththa' tree, which is still there, spreading through its upper windows. I also visited Sarnath, near Benares, where the Lord Buddha first taught his Doctrines to his five disciples. There is still a great stupa at Sarnath where the famous Deer Park used to be, to mark the spot where the Buddha lived and preached for five months, and marvellous statues of the Buddha carved in stone are to be found there. Buddh-Gaya and Sarnath are held to be the two most sacred places by Buddhists all over the world, and pilgrims from far-off places like China, Japan, Siam, Burma, Ceylon, Tibet and Nepal constantly visit these holy places to offer their homage at the shrines there.

It was very difficult for me to locate authentically the exact spots of the important names of ancient

Indian villages, cities, rivers, mountains or forests. The ancient names are so important for all who want to know India in its true light and they should no longer remain in obscurity ; it should be the duty of our new Indian Government, if practicable, to identify the exact spots and to revive their original names again, as they are very much connected with old Indian civilization and culture.

Gradually the whole history of the Buddha's most noble and wonderful life again became vivid in my mind, as in my childhood when I had sat in the shade of a bokul tree at the feet of my gurudeva, Dr Rabindranath Tagore, at Santiniketan school, and first heard the life story of the young prince Siddhartha Gautama, who attained Sambodhi—the Supreme Knowledge—and became the Buddha. As the frescoes at Ajanta represent several incidents in the life of the Buddha, I give here a short account of him, his life and work.

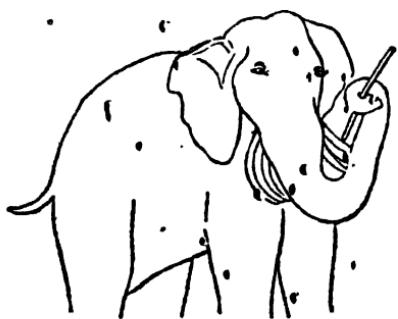
In the northern part of India, at the foot of the Himalayan mountains on the borders of Nepal, is a land of great beauty. With the mighty snow clad peaks of the Himalayas towering over it there lies, at the foot of the mountains, its ancient capital, Kapilavastu, which derives its name from an ancient saint, Maharshi Kapila Muni, who lived outside the city in his hermitage.

Below the city, on the plains to the southward, stretch the green fields of rice, sandal wood and mango groves. From the midst of these rise the banners and towers of the temples ; the priests fill the air from

¹ Kapilavastu is at present known as Baulia village, and near it there is a lake and a river. This place lay some distance north of the present-day town of Gorakhpur, on the north side of the river Rapti in the United Provinces.

morning till night with the murmur of worship and chanting and with the fragrance of incense burnt at the shrines. These plains are rich and fertile, irrigated by continual streams of melted snow which pour down the mountain sides. The air, tempered by a fresh north breeze, is delightfully cool and pleasant.

At Kapilavastu, about the sixth century before Christ, there lived King Shuddhodana, strong of purpose and revered by all men. His wife was Maha Maya Devi, beautiful as the moon and pure as the heart of a water lily, but alas ! they had no child. This was a great sorrow to the King and Queen for they desired a little son above all things.



THE SIX-TUSKED ELEPHANT, CAVE 10

One night, however, the Queen, grieving over her barrenness, fell asleep and dreamed that a six-tusked white elephant entered her womb. She told this dream to the King, her husband, who summoned his wise men.

To his intense joy they predicted that Queen Maha Maya would shortly bear a son, who would either become a mighty monarch or a great and perfectly enlightened teacher and the founder of a world religion. However, the King wished that this long-desired son should be a monarch, the heir to his throne and kingdom, and that he should add glory and lustre to the name of the Shakyas.

Queen Maha Maya was filled with joy. The desire of her life was being fulfilled. She would have a child, and she greatly longed that he should be born at her old home, which was not far away from her husband's

FIRST GLIMPSE OF THE AJANTA CAVES

SHOWING CAVES 10 TO 29





MY TANGA DESCENDING A GHAT ON THE WAY TO AJANTA



THE VILLAGE AND THE RIVER NERI

palace. Nothing was too good for the mother of this longed-for little son. So the King's consent was soon obtained, and Queen Maha Maya set out for the home of her parents, at Devadaha, her native city.¹ She travelled in state as beffited a great queen. Hundreds of servants, escorts of soldiers, litters for the Court ladies, and in the midst Queen Maha Maya herself, in a gorgeous golden state palanquin, sparkling with jewels and mounted on the back of a beautiful royal elephant, proceeded to her father's house.

It was the height of summer in the land. The blazing sunshine poured down on the royal procession, and even the Queen in all the luxury of her travelling equipment felt uncomfortable. In the distance rose the cool grove of Lumbini, the famous pleasure gardens.² Here the Queen decided to rest for a while before starting on her journey again. She descended from her seat to stroll through the shadowy glades of the gardens. Many varieties of strange and attractive trees were there, with exquisite flowers and rich perfume. But the most beautiful of all was the tall *asoka* tree with its wide-spreading boughs, thick green leaves and bud-covered branches which bent down and touched the ground.

Attracted by the gentle shade of this mighty tree, Queen Maha Maya and her handmaidens advanced, and the brilliant sunshine faded into the subdued light of the bower. The hour had come. She stretched out her hand to one of the scarlet-blossomed branches

¹ Probably Devadaha is the name of a lake. The famous Lumbini garden is half way between the city of Kapilavastu and the old town of Devadaha. This kingdom was Buddha's maternal grandfather's estate.

² The Lumbini garden is now called the Rumin Dei in Gorakhpur district, Nepal Terai. One can go either by bus from Gorakhpur or from the railway station of Nowgarh. At the garden was discovered a pillar of King Asoka with an inscription 'Here the Buddha Sakyamuni was born'. Kapilavastu lay about twelve miles west of this garden.

for support, and from her right side above her waist, as the story goes, came forth her infant son. The month was Vaishakha, the first of the year, and the moon was full.

Thus was born in the year 623 B.C. Prince Siddhartha of the family of the Aryan Kshatriya kings, warrior by caste and Adicca by clan, who, in later years, was to surpass in wisdom and righteousness all the Brahmans of the realm.

The wonderful news spread, and to the cradle of the royal child hastened chiefs and courtiers to pay their homage, scattering before him beautiful flowers and presents. Queen Maha Maya, however, died on the seventh day after the birth of Siddhartha.

Among those who came to see the infant Prince was a Brahman, named Asita, famed for his knowledge and scholarship and for the interpretation of signs; but beholding the child he wept, and said: 'I am old and shall not live to see the glory of the Almighty One. For thy son,' he said to the King, 'will rule the world by love and will bring deliverance to all who are caught in the net of ignorance and folly.' The King was pleased, and named his little son Siddhartha, which means 'One who has attained all his desires'.

The King gave orders that none but the young and fair should come near the child. The little Prince was brought up with the greatest care, and lived in the beautiful palace surrounded by lovely gardens and enclosed in a great park. He had for teachers the wisest men in his father's kingdom. His least desire was granted, if not anticipated, and he was surrounded by playmates selected from the noblest families of the state. But he was never boisterous in disposition and did not care much for noisy games. He liked better

to wander about the beautiful gardens by himself. Everyone in the palace noticed how serenely calm and thoughtful was his disposition, in spite of all the gaiety of his surroundings and his youth.

There were temples inside the palace where the priests chanted hymns, and the King, princes and members of the royal family and their subjects came for worship. Sacrifices took place there, which all the boys enjoyed seeing ; they shouted their delight when the victim died ; but not so the little Prince. On ceremonial and other occasions there was feasting and drinking after the temple ritual ended, but from this also the young Prince refrained, preferring to be alone with his own thoughts.

One afternoon, while he sat quietly under a bower in the garden, a duck fell from above at the Prince's feet. After taking it up, he found a bleeding wound with an arrow sticking in the bird's breast. Shocked with grief at seeing so much suffering, he extracted the arrow and bound up the wound. His cousin, Devadatta, ran up to him and asked for the bird as he had shot it, but Siddhartha would not give it to him, saying that it belonged not to him who had had to take its life, but to him who had saved it.

When the Prince grew up his father built for him three palaces, where he dwelt at different seasons of the year. Each was of the utmost luxury, and hundreds of beautiful dancing girls were appointed for his entertainment. Then at the age of eighteen the King wished his son to marry. In this way he hoped to lead him to a worldly life. A great feast was arranged, to which were invited all the young nobles who had sisters, so that Gautama could see and choose for himself. And amongst the fairest was the Prince's cousin, Yashodhara.

On the last day of the revels Gautama distributed jewels as mementoes amongst his departing guests. Yashodhara came last, and there was nothing left for her, but Gautama took from his own neck the garland of flowers and placed it round her neck, choosing her for his bride.

But Yashodhara's father did not wish a daughter of his to marry one who was not a warrior and Gautama, hearing this, proclaimed a contest. To the tournament came all the bravest warriors, all the most skilful marksmen, and all the finest wrestlers in the kingdom. With these the Prince would compete and exhibit his prowess. His relatives feared for him. 'How,' said they, 'will you be able to hit the quickly-turning boar, you who have always refused to aim at any living thing?' Gautama only laughed, and on the day he outstripped everyone and carried off all the prizes. Thus at the age of eighteen, Prince Siddhārtha, through surpassing all in a contest of manly feats, won the beautiful Princess Yashodhara, and the wedding was celebrated with the utmost magnificence.

All was now prospering, and the King felt that his son was safely settled in life. Several years passed on. A beautiful garden was laid out for the young Prince on the other side of the city. This garden was so lovely that it was called the Garden of Delight. Great trees threw their shade all around, there were masses of flowers—scarlet, purple and white—fountains in marble basins, and in the midst a wonderful pavilion for rest during the heat of the day. The King felt sure that if his son once saw this garden he would be content and wish for nothing further, so he ordained that the Prince should visit it.

A proclamation was issued, commanding that the

streets of the city through which the royal procession would pass should be gorgeously decorated. Flags and banners were to be hung from the windows, and none but the young and fair were to be seen in the streets ; through this gay scene the Prince was to pass in his royal chariot to visit the marvellous garden.

The magnificent cavalcade set forth and all went well until at the corner of a street the Prince saw, creeping slowly along, the pathetic figure of an old and decrepit man, who humbly begged for alms from the joyous crowd.

‘ What kind of man is this ? ’ exclaimed the Prince, seeing poverty-stricken age for the first time in his life.

Sirc, answered his charioteer, ‘ it is an aged man bowed down with years.’

‘ Are all men, then, or this man only,’ inquired the Prince, ‘ subject to age ? ’ And there was only one reply, ‘ All men, O Prince ! ’

All pleasure in the wondrous garden was quenched by this reply. Of what avail such transient pleasures of the world if the end of all was what he had just witnessed. Sadly the Prince turned homewards, reflecting deeply on the decay of life.

Another day the Prince drove forth again, and by the roadside lay a sick man in terrible agony. Never before had Gautama seen sickness of any sort, and he was stricken with horror to hear, in answer to his inquiry, that all men were subject to be seized at any time with diseases and maladies such as had overtaken the unhappy sufferer before him. Once more the cavalcade returned without having seen the Garden of Delight.

A third day was fixed for the visit, but again it was thwarted. A funeral procession descended the beflagged and decorated street with a lifeless body in its midst.

Flowers and garlands were strewn over the corpse, and the followers, bowed down with grief, cried out from time to time, 'Call on the name of Lord', as they proceeded. Once more the Prince sought an explanation of his charioteer, and learned that this was Death, the last and greatest enemy of man, who comes to high and low alike, and from whom there is no escape.

In silent and sorrowful meditation the young Prince returned home, and the treasures of his palace were as nothing to him, for now he knew they were only his for a time, and that the fate of those men whom he had seen would surely and inevitably be his.

On the fourth occasion another sight met the Prince's eyes. Along the road came a man clad in mean garments and carrying a beggar's bowl, but serene, dignified and self-controlled. How could one apparently so poor have attained such peace and content? Who was he? The charioteer, Chandaka, was appealed to, and answered: 'My lord, he is *sanyasi*, a holy man. He has abandoned all desires, controlled all passions, suffers no envy, and begs his daily food.'

A light dawned on Gautama. Not in riches, power, luxury and wealth lay the secret of Eternal Life, but in renunciation, poverty, self-control and meditation.

The rumour of his son's adventures reached the ears of the King. In spite of his strict orders, the Prince had become acquainted with Age, Disease and Death. It was useless issuing orders for the punishment of those who had thus shown themselves; they were nowhere to be found. The blow he dreaded was falling, as he saw his son abandoning more and more the life of pleasure usual for a royal Prince.

He summoned his Prime Minister and redoubled his precautions. Triple walls were built round hi

son's palace. More guards were mounted. The kingdom was ransacked for more and more beautiful dancing girls, who were commanded never to cease their efforts to divert the Prince's mind with music and pleasure. His devoted wife, Yashodhara, was troubled and suffered many dreams of the days that were to come.

But the three terrible sights which he had seen had sunk far too deep into the heart of Prince Siddhartha to be eradicated by material pleasures. Old Age, Disease, and lastly Death would inevitably come, and the more he reflected on these the more trivial and unworthy appeared to him the life of heedless pleasure which was apparently his lot. He could hardly eat or sleep, but wandered round his gorgeous palace day and night, searching for a solution of the terrible problem which confronted him. All who are born must die, and all who die must be reborn. There was neither beginning nor end to the Wheel of Life.

It was midnight, and for Gautama, now in his twenty-ninth year, there was no rest. All the evening had been given over to revelry, sweet music and frivolous play while beautiful maidens had danced their most alluring dances in the hope of rousing in their royal master some sign of interest. Outside a glorious moon flooded the gardens with light, and, wearied with the revels, the Prince arose and went into the garden, seeking in the silence of the night an answer to the riddle which constantly troubled him. He sat down beneath a great *jambu* tree, and to him there seemed to come a light and the knowledge of the way of peace.

For a time Siddhartha reflected on the wonderful revelation, then he arose and slowly re-entered the palace. He traversed the marble courts, bathed in

silver moonlight and silent now save for the playing fountains, and entered the great hall where the dancing girls were lying, wrapped in deepest slumber, their musical instruments beside them. There they lay, just as they had sunk down to rest, careless of their appearance, dishevelled in their clothing, and looking to his sad mind very like lifeless bodies. For him not only had they ceased to be attractive, but they were even repulsive, and he marvelled how a man could succumb to 'passion' if he were not seduced by dress, jewels and artificial allurements.

Silently he left the hall. He must flee the palace ; but how ? Guards were everywhere, and the Prince, though nominally free, was 'virtually imprisoned by his father.

He sought his 'faithful charioteer, Chandaka. 'Chandaka ! arise and saddle my horse Kantaka quickly and quietly. We must go hence ! ' And while Chandaka went for the horse Siddhartha stole away to take one more look at his wife and little son.

In the midst of the gay assembly the Princess Yashodhara lay sweetly sleeping on her bed, strewn thick with the sweet-scented jasmine flowers, her newly-born son in her arms. The Prince yearned to gather up the tiny child in his arms for a last kiss, but feared to awaken the mother ; so with tears in his eyes he took a last fond look, bent down and kissed his wife's feet. Then he silently drew the silken curtains and left the chamber.

In the palace court-yard stood the mighty horse ready saddled, with Chandaka, the faithful charioteer, awaiting the arrival of his master. Silently Siddhartha mounted his horse Kantaka, stole through the great gates of the palace, past the sleeping guards, gained the high road, and then urged the horse into a gallop.

As dawn broke they reached and forded the river Anoma. When he reached the farther bank the Prince dismounted and told his faithful follower that the time had now come for them to part. One by one he divested himself of his gorgeous jewels and his princely robes, until nothing remained but the fine white muslin under-garments. Then from the woods appeared a hunter bearing in his hands the russet robes of a hermit. The Prince took these, clad himself in them and, handing his fine muslins to Chandaka, disappeared into the forest.

Sadly Chandaka turned homewards, weeping and wailing, leading Kantaka to the city of Kapilavastu with a great load of sorrow, while Siddhartha tarried in the forest alone. For seven long years he dwelt at Gaya in the forest searching for the way of escape from the three terrible woes. He searched in many places where he hoped to obtain peace and knowledge from higher powers. No penance was too hard for him to perform, no fast too severe for him to endure. He reduced his food to the smallest quantity sufficient to support life, subjected himself to the most rigorous self-discipline and at last became so weak that he fainted and lay on the ground as if dead. But still the longed-for Enlightenment was yet to come.

Attracted by the story of his mortifications and the rigour of his life, five wandering Brahman hermits attached themselves to him and became his disciples, watchfully waiting to see the final results of Buddha's austerities. The fame of his holiness had now spread through the surrounding country, and villagers flocked to receive his blessings. Seated under the old Bodhi tree on the bank of the Niranjana river, now called the river Phalgu, he still meditated on the great Secret, with

the firm resolve that until he had attained his goal he would not move from the place.

At last that night it came. He received the Light, and it grew clear to him that mortifications and fasts and all the terrible austerities to which he had subjected his body were unavailing ; he knew now that it was the inward thirst for life which was the cause of all the evil in the world. Could men but rid themselves of all desire, then they would be happy, and the three great woes would be conquered. This freedom was Nirvana, and the life of struggle towards it he called the Way of Peace. So he attained the great Enlightenment and became Buddha on the full moon day of Vaishakha, 587 B.C.

A flood of peace filled his mind. Now he would be able to show mankind the path of Righteousness, and the sorrows of Life would be vanquished. Rising, he went down into the river to bathe and refresh himself with the cool water. After bathing he found that he had not strength enough to raise himself out of the water, so weak had he become through his long fasts. Espying the branch of an overhanging banyan tree, he grasped it and with its aid reached the bank, where he sank down as if dead. Now a beautiful maiden Sujata, the daughter of Goparaja, a rich landholder of a village nearby, woke up long, long before dawn, feeling uneasy. Something urged her to go with food to the Lord Buddha. From her father's great herd of cows she chose the finest black one, and with great devotion cooked rice with its milk. Then long before the sun was up, the morning dew still hanging from each blade of grass, she carried this milk-rice on a golden dish on her head to the thin, frail, fair figure of the Princely Ascetic lying on the ground under the old Bodhi tree.

She humbly presented her offerings with a reverent obeisance to the Buddha. Being too weak to murmur a word, the Buddha ate the sweet milk-rice, was strengthened and refreshed, and blessed Sujata, the village maiden. Thus 'gaining strength aloof from desire', he meditated again.

When the five Brahman ascetic-disciples saw the Buddha taking solid food from the village girl, they disappointedly said: 'Our master has turned back from his goal just when he was on the very point of reaching it. The Gautama giving up exertion falls into luxury again.' Then they all deserted him and left for Benares.

But Mara, the Evil One, viewed the Enlightenment of the holy man with hatred. He determined to overthrow him, so assembling all his demon hosts and mounting his terrible war elephant, he advanced against the Tree of Wisdom, where sat the Buddha surrounded by the angels of heaven. So frightful was the sight of the Evil One that all fled, leaving the Lord Buddha alone.

Then the leader of the hosts of the Evil One advanced, disguised as a messenger and bearing a letter from the princes of his old home, imploring him to come to their assistance, for great calamities had befallen them. Devadatta, his cousin, had usurped the throne, cast his old father into prison, and held as captives his dear wife and only son. But the Buddha, in spite of this dreadful news, was not to be turned from his high purpose. Then came forward Mara's three beautiful daughters, and they used all their seductive arts to tempt the holy man: they danced before him, offering him the lordship of the world, but as they approached him they were turned into hideous hags. Mara was now enraged at

the failure of all his devices to tempt the Buddha away from his chosen path, and, rallying his evil troops, hurled them at the saint. A terrific thunder-storm accompanied by a violent whirlwind burst upon him, and deadly poisoned weapons, burning coals and scorching sand filled the air around him, while a fearful darkness descended ; but all was of no avail, for the fierce thunder-bolts changed into lotus blooms which fell harmlessly and carpeted the ground, while perfumes filled the air, and in the glory that burst forth Mara and his evil hosts fled away discomfited.

This episode of Gautama's combat with Mara is a psychological representation of the struggle that was going on between the satanic and angelic tendencies of Gautama's mind, and the victory of the latter over the former. Covetousness, discontent, hunger, thirst, laziness, dullness, fear, doubt, disparagement; stubbornness, love of glory and hospitality, ill-earned fame, self-exaltation, and condemnation of others formed the whole array of Mara's or the Black One's army.

For seven weeks longer the Buddha remained in his old position under the Bodhi tree, meditating on the glories of Nirvana, the complete cessation of all sorrows for which he had to wander so long through this round of rebirths. Then he arose, left the forest, and went forth into the world once more, to spread abroad the good tidings of the Way of Peace.

Leaving the quiet woods of Uruvela, the Buddha set out on foot to Benares, about a hundred and fifty miles from there. He thus came, at a place near Benares called Isipatana, to the Deer Park 'Mrigadava', now known as Sarnath, where "the five Brahman ascetics who had been his former attendants and disciples at Uruvela lived. Their names were Kondanna,

Bhaddiya, Assaji, Vappa and Mahanama. These five hermits saw him approaching and determined that they would pay him no reverence but merely show him those courtesies which were owing to his human birth. But the Buddha divined their intention and met them with such overwhelming love that they were ashamed and, rising, paid him all the honour and reverence that was due to a Master.

When they were seated, he first unfolded to them his doctrines, the four Noble Truths, namely the noble Truth of Suffering, the second Truth of the Origin of Suffering, the third Truth of the Annihilation of Suffering, and the path leading to the Destruction of Suffering. Now it was very clear to the disciples of the Master that there was no denial of the fact that there was suffering in this world and there was the way to get rid of this ceaseless suffering. Then, being requested by the disciples, the Master narrated to them the Eightfold Path leading to the Annihilation of Suffering. This was the noble Eightfold Path which consists of (1) right understanding or views ; (2) right mindedness or resolution or thoughts ; (3) right speech ; (4) right action or deeds ; (5) right living or mode of livelihood ; (6) right endeavour or exertion or effort ; (7) right attentiveness or recollection or mindfulness, and lastly (8) right concentration or meditation. The Master then requested them to follow the Eightfold Path in order to rid themselves of ceaseless suffering and to attain the supreme bliss of Nirvana—the way to deathlessness—the state that leads beyond all lives and deaths.

These disciples received and practised his precepts with such eagerness and assiduity that, at the end, they themselves were filled with the Divine Fire, and set forth to carry his Message to the world. These ascetics

were the first five *Arhats*. *Arhat* is the name given to one who in this life realizes the state that is not subject to birth or death, which is Nirvana. Thus they were the first members of the Sangha or the order of Bhikkhus acknowledging the Lord Buddha as the Master. From here the Buddha sent forth sixty disciples to preach all round the country.

In the Deer Park 'Mrigadava', now called Sarnath, near Benares, the Buddha preached his first great sermon, the fame of which spread all over India, till it presently reached the ears of the old King Shuddhodana, who, realizing that this wonderful preacher was the Prince, his son, sent messengers desiring that the Holy One should visit him. And after receiving his message the Buddha sent word that he was returning home.

It was almost the end of the cold season when the Holy One, accompanied by a great number of his disciples, set forth for Kapilavastu. Spring was in the air, the grass was green, birds were singing, and the road on either side was bordered with trees laden with gorgeous scarlet blossoms. When he neared the city the whole populace came out to greet him with flowers in their hands to scatter in his path ; the great nobles with their ladies and an escort of soldiers assembled to give a royal reception to the son of their King ; but walking slowly through the crowd, and collecting alms in his little mendicant's bowl came a humble beggar man clad in the tattered yellow robes of a wandering friar, in whom, to their amazement, they recognized the Prince. Through the gates of the city he came, passed up the crowded streets, and amidst the acclamations of the multitudes entered the gate of the palace. The Princess, being told of this entry, reported it to the King, who at once went out to remonstrate with

his son, saying that to appear as a beggar was to put the royal family to shame. 'Not one of all our ancestors ever begged his bread,' said the King.

'But my ancestry is that of the Buddhas,' replied his son, 'and every one of them lived upon alms.' Upon this the old King was converted, and taking his son's begging bowl in his hand, conducted him with every honour into the palace.

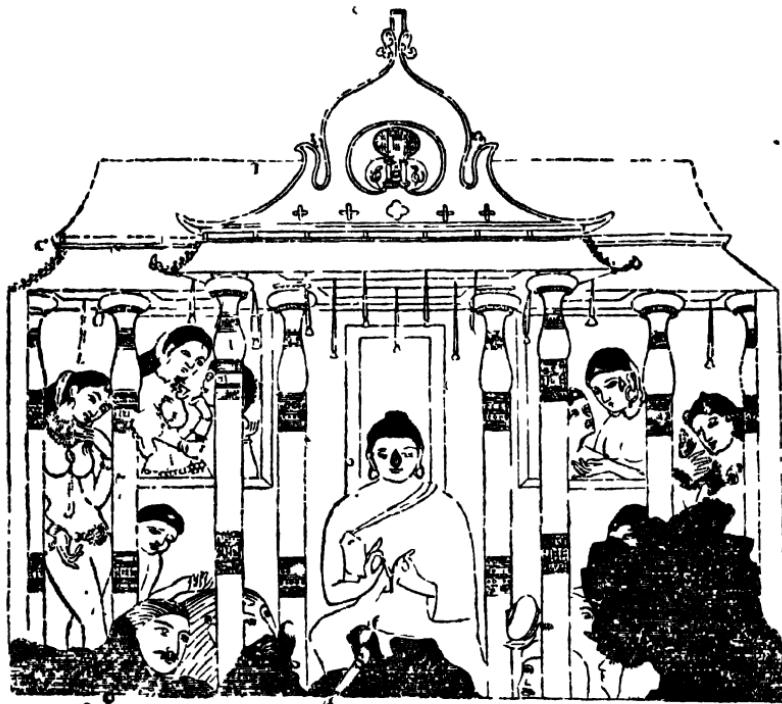
Then he visited the rooms of his wife, Yashodhara, who had not come with the rest of the family to greet him, for she wished to welcome him alone in his own part of the palace. As soon as she saw him she fell at his feet and did homage to him. Then he saw that she too had tried to follow her beloved husband on the Path of Peace. No longer was she wearing the rich robes and jewels of a princess, but was clad in a plain russet garment and had worn the same sad clothing ever since his departure.

But the Buddha had not yet seen his little son. So on the morrow his mother dressed him in his most gorgeous robes and splendid jewels, and sent him to ask his father for his inheritance, telling the boy that his father possessed great mines of wealth which would be his by right.

The boy hesitated at first, for he had known no father save the old King, but his mother, taking him to the window, pointed out to him the Buddha who was then passing through the gate. The boy went straight to him and asked him frankly for his inheritance. The Buddha gazed at him for a moment and then turning to one of his disciples said to him, 'Give!' And Yashodhara knew that her husband would receive the boy amongst his disciples. So Rahula, too, received the yellow robe.

Gautama Buddha's teaching now began to spread, and thousands of converts were made, including kings,

noblemen, Brahmans, and a great number of house-holders. The Master now set out for Rajagriha, the capital city of Magadha, and halted for a little while



THE BUDDHA TEACHING, CAVE 16

at the mango grove of Anupia. It was here that a great number of the Shakya princes followed him to join his disciples, among whom were his two cousins, Ananda, who became his personal attendant, and Devadatta. At Sravasti¹ another great convert was

¹ Sravasti is a very great and important ancient city. It is in the Gonda district, United Provinces, only ten miles from the Balarampur railway station. Balarampur is a Hindu State by the bend of the river Rapti. On the borders of Gonda is the famous Buddhist Jetavana, where the Buddha lived and preached his gospels in twenty-five *varsavasas*, i.e. during the rainy seasons of four months in each year. Anathapindaka belonged to this place. One can go to the site of Sravasti by tanga, motor car or on foot.

Seth Anathapindaka, a very wealthy merchant, who, hearing of his fame, gave a great sum of money to the Order, and begged the Master to visit his home. Then all along the road which stretched between Rajagriha and Sravasti, the merchant's home, he caused to be built at every league a resting-place (vihara) and at the end of the journey at Veluvana he bought, for as much gold as would cover the ground, a beautiful grove in which he erected a wonderful house for the Master and his disciples, with fine halls, wide terraces and beautiful tanks, and cells around it for the eighty disciples. When the Buddha saw it Anathapindaka asked him what he should do with it, to which the Buddha replied that it should be bestowed on the Order. Then the merchant took a golden vessel, and from it poured some water into the Master's hand, confirming the gift.

Round this beautiful monastery there were cloisters, surrounded by lotus-pools, fragrant mango trees and slender fan palms, with banyan trees, whose roots dropping from the branches formed new stems, thus making shady groves and leafy walks from each tree. The Master occupied a special cell—the *Gandha-Kuti*, or Apartment of Fragrant Smell—in the famous Jetavana convent near Sravasti.

There was also another famous grove—the Bamboo Grove—given by King Bimbisara, in which the Buddha passed the first year of his ministration. The next three rainy seasons were spent in the Bamboo Groves at Rajagriha near Nalanda. There it was that he taught that the offering of Righteousness was better than that of material sacrifices, and he stood as a champion for the beasts of the fields, whom men so thoughtlessly and wantonly tortured and slew. He was always for compassion and mercy.

That the Sangha or the assembly of his disciples grew so rapidly was certainly not due to the ease of life Gautama Buddha offered men. We get many glimpses of their austerity as they slept on the bare earth with no covering but the yellow robe : 'Cold, Master, is the winter night ; the time of frost is coming ; rough is the ground with the treading of the hoofs of cattle ; thin is the couch of leaves, and light is the yellow robe ; the winter wind blows keen,' said a dweller in Alavi as he saw the Teacher seated in the midst of the Sinsapa Forest absorbed in meditation.

Amongst his converts were a great number of princesses, accustomed only to walk upon smooth marble and to be protected from the heat of the sun and the violence of the wind. The Buddha's mother had died long before." Meanwhile the old King Shuddhodana also died. Queen Mahapajapati, the Buddha's own mother's sister, wanted to retire from the household life. At that time five hundred ladies from the wealthy and aristocratic families of Kapilavastu came to Mahapajapati and requested her to take them to the Master. Mahapajapati cut off her hair and, putting on yellow robes along with those five hundred ladies, set out on foot towards Vaisali (in the northern part of Bihar), where the Master was residing. Then with her feet swollen on account of her long walk and with the dust of the road still upon her, sad and dejected, she stood weeping outside the vihara. 'She, with the help of Ananda the beloved disciple of Buddha, secured the Master's permission to enter into the Holy Order on the condition that they would be called Bhikkhunis and would follow strictly the Eight Rules, which were more rigid than those for monks. Thus Mahapajapati and the five hundred ladies assembled before the Buddha,

agreed gladly to follow and obey the rules with great devotion and were converted into the Order of the Bhikkhunis. So Mahapajapati became the first Bhikkhuni. After this the Buddha realized that the time had come to establish a proper order of Bhikkhunis or nuns.

The ministration of the Buddha did not go entirely unopposed. Not only were the Brahmins often his great opponents, but also some of the powerful kings, who from countless past births had been his enemies. The Buddha, however, knowing of their enmity, always spoke well of them, and occasionally preached to them, and finally prevailed by means of his great patience and forbearance.

A Brahman, by name Bavari, living on the banks of the Godavari was performing sacrificial rites. Another Brahman arrived after a long journey and asked him to give him five hundred coins. Bavari, poor as he was, was not in a position to satisfy this request, whereupon the fiery guest, being enraged, cursed Bavari that his head would be rent into seven pieces. Bavari became anxious when he heard this. A god who was kind to him assured him that the guest was a fraud and therefore could not possibly know the meaning of the curse, and advised him to go to the Buddha of Sravasti and ask him to explain these things. Bavari called his sixteen disciples, Ajita and others, and asked them to approach the Buddha, with those questions in mind. They started on their long journey, through vast towns, such as Paithana in Aurangabad district, Mahishmati, Ujjain, Vidisa (modern Bhilsa), Vanasabhaya, Kosambi (near Allahabad), Saketa, Sravasti, Setavya, Kapilavastu, Kushinagara, Pava and Rajagrigha, the capital of the Magadhas, where the Buddha had gone from

Sravasti. When the Buddha saw them approaching, he could at once guess what queries they had in their minds and satisfied them by explaining the meaning of the curse. Bavari and his disciples were convinced of his miraculous powers and his supreme knowledge. They prostrated themselves before him and then the Buddha blessed them.

At the close of the wet season, the Master and all his disciples would mingle once more with the busy throng of men. The day was most carefully planned. Rising at early dawn, Gautama would go out either alone or with his followers to the village or town collecting alms. He would then break his fast, and would discourse to the monks, and give them exercises in meditation suited to their attainments. They would then leave him, going each to his favourite spot to meditate, whilst Gautama would lie down on his right side 'in the lion posture' in a quiet chamber, or, better still in the cool shade of the forest, and rest—not sleeping, yet not practising systematic meditation. Then the people would come to him for his teachings. When he had taken pity on them and had preached to them, he would bathe and spend a period of meditation in the cool of the evening. And in the first watch of the night he would answer the questions of the disciples or preach to them again, on 'Dharma', the Law of Deliverance. The Buddha commanded his followers to return love for hatred, forgiveness for injuries, good for evil and truth for falsehood.

While his discussions with the learned were more or less formal and often logical, in his conversation with ordinary men the Master generally resorted to similes and parables, fables and folk-lore, historical anecdotes and episodes, proverbs and popular sayings. His

similes and parables were drawn for the most part from the jungle—the spoor of elephants, the ways of woodmen, the life of trees—or from the village : herdsman, farmer, potter, charioteer, all provided him with images, whilst the current folk-lore of his day was converted to religious purposes. The great things of nature too—the ‘ patient earth ’, the wonderful moon, the sun in his splendour, the majestic rivers—all these supplied him with a wealth of imagery.

It is said of him that, when asked by a farmer why he did not work for his living, he answered with the charming parable of the Sower, in which Gautama claims that he, too, is a farmer, and that he sows seed whose crop is ambrosia ; which of course led to the farmer’s conversion. As the Buddha’s foremost disciple, the venerable Sariputta, remarked : ‘ It is by similes that men come often to understanding.’

Suffering is caused by craving of a wrong sort ; to get rid of this craving we must adopt right moral conduct. The Buddha wanted his followers, monks and householders to abstain from such discussions as are likely to stir up quarrels among different sects. The Buddha saw the people writhing in pain. His striking similes entered straight into the heart. How true to life it appears when a fool is compared to a pot half-filled with water, or to a noisy rivulet, and a wise man to a calm serene lake, or to a broad silent ruin ; or that in which a man who succumbs to death while he is in the midst of his relatives, talking to them, is compared to a cow that is taken to the butcher’s block of execution ; or that in which the people of the world who are always tussling with one another, are compared to fishes in scanty water that struggle for existence.

While the Buddha was roaming from one place to

another he converted the village folk who used to come to the Master on hearing of his supernatural powers. Once a village woman came to the Master with her dead son. Being asked by the Buddha what she wanted, she told the Master, 'O Lord, I have heard your name and fame, and I know you can do wonderful things and are always kind to the poor. Then please do help me by making my dead son alive.' At this the Master asked her to go and collect some mustard seeds from a house which knew no death. The mother went out in haste to collect the seeds, but returned back not being able to gather any, as everywhere she had found ravages of death. The woman now realized the impermanent nature of all things and became less sorrowful. She, being moved by the supernatural power of the Lord, fell at his feet and was converted into the Order of the Bhikkhunis or nuns.

The Buddha must be credited with having introduced reforms into existing conditions of Hinduism and Hindu society. The success of his system was due to his wonderful personality, his sweet reasonableness, his courageous and constant insistence upon a few fundamental principles, and the way he made his teaching accessible to all, high or low.

A wicked dacoit, Angulimala, having made a garland of nine hundred and ninety fingers, representing the number of murders he had committed, wanted to complete the thousand by killing even his own mother. One day as he saw the Buddha approaching, the dacoit decided that this was his great chance to fulfil his desire to complete the garland. But the Buddha's wonderful power brought about a change over him. The murderer felt that he could not approach the noble figure. The Buddha said to him, 'Be still as I am still'. The fierce

murderer felt compelled to listen to him quietly, and then he expressed his remorse for all his evil deeds. Then the Lord Buddha received him into his Holy Order.

The teaching of the first Buddhist missionaries was eagerly welcomed and, though it found acceptance at first chiefly amongst the nobility, it was at heart a democratic movement into which Brāhmans, kings, warriors, cultivators, and men and women of low caste and of no caste, were equally welcomed.

There would come to him kings and their retinues, and other lay people, or Brāhmans and religious teachers who had heard of his fame ; and on moonlit nights when the air is fragrant with the blossoms of flowering trees and solemn with the march of the stars, they would sit enthralled by his discourse on the eternal verities. At other times, his disciples might be seen pacing with downcast eyes amongst the villages of Magadha and Kosala, giving in return for their daily food the teaching of the Law, which we are reminded again and again is ' the greatest of gifts '.

To the assembly of men and women—Bhikkhus and Bhikkhunis—Gautama Buddha gave fully and without reserve his religious and moral teaching, and it was to them that he entrusted the handing on of the torch when he passed away. Ananda was appointed as his successor and for twenty-five years was Gautama's faithful shadow, combining the duties of pupil, body-servant and chaplain with admirable devotion. These successors were so devoted to their Lord that one of his great disciples, Maha Moggallana, said, ' I have comprehended the Teacher, I have lived the teaching of the Enlightened One, I have borne the burden of His Order and have thus snapped the ties of the succession of births '.

Once, as the Buddha was wandering alone he came to the 'house of a potter' at Rajagriha.¹ In that house there was already dwelling Pukkusati, a former King of Takshashila and a friend of King Bimbisara. Gautama asked for a night's shelter at the potter's house. He was told that a friar of noble birth was already within, but he was allowed to share the hospitality of the house ; and the two men sat meditating, till Gautama, noting the serenity of his companion, asked him why he had left the world and who was his teacher. Pukkusati replied that it was the Sakyamuni whom he followed. Gautama Buddha did not make himself known at once, but began to expound the Dharma, till Pukkusati cried out with joy, ' I have found the 'Master whom I sought ! ' So sure was Gautama's touch on human hearts and minds. More potent than his method and his word was the Blessed One's wonderful personality. When he talked with men, his serene look inspired them with awe and reverence, and his lovely voice struck them with rapture and amazement. To come under his spell was to be his for ever. His heart always overflowed with kindness. To meet him was to be penetrated by his love and to know him was to love him for ever.

The Buddha had been suffering from a severe illness and had declared that he would not live much longer. Whilst staying in the city of Pava he was invited to a

¹ Rajagriha was the capital of King Bimbisara and here for a long time the Buddha resided and preached many important sermons. 'Rajagriha' means 'the abode of the kings', and the hills of the place are filled with bamboo and karnikara groves, Buddhist caves and Jain remains. A hermitage of the Buddha is at Gridhra Kuta. The site of the great Nalanda monastery (first to twelfth century A.D.) is six miles from Rajagriha. It is thirty-three miles south of the Bakhtiarpur railway junction. One can visit these places from Patna or the ancient city called Pataliputra, which was Asoka's capital.

meal by a blacksmith named Chunda. To do honour to the Master, the smith prepared a meal of 'Sukaramaddavam' (boar's delight), a kind of mushroom which wild boars much delight to eat. This was the principal dish offered to the exalted visitor. The Buddha became very faint and, though he set out for Kushinagara, had to rest many times on the way. At last he reached the city and said to Ananda : 'Inform the smith Chunda that his offering will bring a great reward, for it will be the immediate cause of my attaining Nirvana.' The Buddha said this, lest Chunda should feel remorse or others might blame him, but he gave strict orders that the remainder of the offering was to be buried. Then he lay down on a couch in a grove of blossoming sal trees near Kushinagara, on the bank of the river Hiranyavati, sending a message to inform the Malla Princes of his arrival. Thus a great company of nobles, princes, priests and ladies of the court assembled around the Buddha's death-bed. None of his disciples was more stricken with grief than Ananda, to whom the Buddha left instructions about his burial and the continuance of the Rule. The Master said, 'The "Dhamma" (the Law) and the "Vinaya" (discipline), which I have taught you, will after my death be your master :

¹ Kushinagara or Kushinara is to the south-west of the river Gandak, about thirty-two miles east of Gorakhpur, United Provinces, and one and a half miles west of Kasia police station. It can be reached from Gorakhpur, Tashil Deoria or Padrauna railway station by bus. The village is now called Matha Kunwar. Due to the benevolence of Birla Brothers, a rest house 'dharmashala' has been built for visitors. Within short distances of each other there is a stupa supposed to contain the ashes of the Buddha, a stone recumbent Nirvana image of the dying Buddha fourteen cubits long and several old and new viharas. Every year many Buddhists assemble here to perform the Vaishakhi Purnima Puja and a fair is also held there on the occasion.

“ The Law be your refuge !
 The Law be your shelter !
 Do not look for any other refuge ! ”

When Ananda wept bitterly, the dying Buddha comforted him, saying that he had done well, and that if he persevered he too would win freedom, and he prophesied that the very least of those present should at last prevail and reach Nirvana. The Buddha's last words were : ‘ Decay is inherent in all compound things.’ Thus, in 543 B.C. on the Full Moon day of Vaishākha, after a most remarkably successful ministry of 45 long years the Buddha, at the age of 80, succumbed to the inexorable law of Anicca (impermanence)—Maha-Parinirvana.

The Malla Princes wrapped his body in folds of the finest cloth, and for six days it lay in state. On the seventh day it was burnt on a magnificent pyre in the coronation hall of the Princes, and the holy body was entirely consumed, leaving only the relics like a heap of pearls, of which the chief, enshrined in glorious monuments, were the four teeth, the two cheek-bones and the skull.

Nearly 2,500 years have elapsed since the Buddha passed away from the earth, and still today one third of the population of the world revere the name of the Exalted One, who taught the way to attain supreme bliss. The ‘Buddha’ (the Enlightened One), ‘Dharma’ (Doctrine) and the ‘Sangha’ (Congregation) are called the ‘Tri-Ratnam’ or ‘Three Jewels’ before which even today all faithful Buddhists bow down in deep veneration. The holy formula of taking refuge in Tri-Ratnam or the Holy Trinity is still the same as in the Buddha's time and is sung in

Buddhist temples in every part of the globe as given below :

‘ Buddham Saranam gacchami !
Dhammam Saranam gacchami !
Sangham Saranam gacchami ! ’
‘ I take refuge in the Buddha !
I take refuge in the Dhamma !
I take refuge in the Sangha ! ’

Namo Buddhaya

Chapter Four

MY SECOND VISIT TO AJANTA

By the middle of the year 1919, the sale of my drawings had enabled me to save over two hundred pounds, wherewith to buy the necessary materials for a prolonged stay in the jungle, including camping kit and stores. I decided to take with me as little as possible, and set off with a folding cot, a medicine box, some tinned food, a water filter, petrol lamps, tins of petrol, rolls of drawing and tracing papers, paints and colours, ladders, large and small drawing boards, and one or two other requisites for life in the open. I had one servant with me as companion and cook. Now the greater expedition began, and early in June 1919 I left Calcutta for the second time, in order to study in the age-old rock-cut temples, well aware by this time of the great value of my prospective studies.

On this occasion I did not leave the train at Jalgaon, but proceeded a little further, to a station called Pachora, on the main line of the Great Indian Peninsula Railway, two hundred and thirty miles from Bombay. Since my last visit I was glad to find that a narrow-gauge railway, running north-east through Khāndesh in the valley of the river Tapti, from Pachora Junction to Jamner, had been opened and that the nearest point now to the Ajanta caves was Pahur station, twenty-five miles from the junction.

Arriving at Pachora very late at night, I had to wait until morning for the train to Pahur. Being this time an upper-class passenger, I was allowed to occupy immediately one of the compartments of the

narrow-gauge railway. The train stood in the fields some distance from the station. A number of coolies carried my luggage in the dark, and we entered the carriage for the night's rest immediately, instead of remaining in the waiting room at the station.

My servant, Narayan, soon made beds for us both, and we tried to go to sleep till daybreak. In the village some little distance away we heard the sounds of music, with drums and flutes, songs and dances, and also saw through the window of the carriage the glowing light of torches in the distance, piercing the darkness. It was impossible for me to sleep, so I set off to see what festivity was on foot, leaving Narayan behind with my belongings in the compartment.

I found that an Indian *jatra* performance was taking place under a gigantic banyan tree in an open field by the side of the village. In the middle of a great crowd a youth, dressed up as a girl, danced and sang with considerable grace. Most of the listeners sat on the ground, and a great many torches were fixed, hanging from the branches of the tree. The young dancer in the centre seemed to be singing of joys and sorrows ; and what appeared to be a choir of about twenty people chanted the refrain to the accompaniment of drums, flutes and other instruments. It was a kind of spoken Marathi language, which I was unable to understand ; and as the dance was but a monotonous repetition, it did not amuse me enough to wish to stay there very long.

Soon the dawn broke through the eastern sky, and the cocks began to crow. The dogs howled in the village ; the lamps were already out and the people astir. As I came near the station I saw a small hut, and near by a large crowd had assembled. I found that

it was a little sweetmeat shop, inside which a number of people were conversing cordially with the bearded proprietor, to whom they referred as their 'mama', or uncle. The old shopkeeper was frying jilebies—a favourite Indian sweetmeat—and serving them hot to his eager and hungry customers. I joined the crowd and, having secured a portion of the delicacy, carried it back to the train to eat with Narayan on our journey to Pahur.

"There were hardly any passengers on this line, and there was only one upper-class carriage in the train, with three or four lower-class carriages put together. My drawing boards were too big to go in the luggage van, but I explained to the guard the importance of conveying them, and they were finally carried with both the doors of the van open, and a man in charge of the luggage inside.

At eight in the morning our train left Pachorā Junction, but soon halted again to take up a short and stout gentleman who came hurrying along. He was dressed in khaki shorts and puttees, and wore a sola topee. He came into my compartment and was also bound for Pahur. Our train finally left the junction for Pahur, from which the caves are only a distance of about fourteen miles to the south.

The gentleman who had so nearly missed the train was a railway engineer, and he asked the guard to join us in the carriage. Amongst other luggage he had a double-barrelled shot gun, and as we travelled through the cotton fields we saw numbers of buck and deer feeding in the open fields. My fellow passenger became quite excited, and asked the guard to stop the train so that he might shoot some of them. The train stopped, and the hunter got down and made towards the herds

of deer ; but after a few unsuccessful shots when the game scattered, he was obliged to return, disappointed, to the train which was ready to start without him.

Having passed Sindorni station, we arrived at Pahur soon after ten o'clock the same morning, and I felt that at last I had reached the threshold of my undertaking.

I was surprised to find no conveyance to carry my things to the caves, though I had previously sent word to Ajanta and also to the stationmaster of Pahur. Pahur, being the last big village in the British territory, there was a post office, dak-bungalow and police outpost. Here, through the help of a police officer and of the village headman or *patel*, I was able to find two bullock carts, but only one cart-driver. This too was no easy task to perform at Pahur during the cotton season, as the people worked long hours in the fields, and earned more money than by driving carts.

My servant Narayan was anything but a skilful cart-driver, so I took the place of the absent driver, and we started off in the forenoon to go to Fardapur, which was about ten miles away. The bullocks in these parts are almost wild, and they are hard to drive, except by their proper masters. I found this out to my cost, for as we descended a slope near the bank of the river Baghora, the cart ran off the road and collided with the boulders in mid-stream. A wheel came off, and a tin burst open and the kerosene oil it contained floated with the current. I saw it was no good attempting to drive these wild animals any farther, so I left Narayan behind with the cart and the luggage till the actual driver should come from the fields, and started for the caves myself in the other cart.

On my way, I saw on the left many people and carts gathered together in the bare open space, by the side

of a tiny village called Vakod. It was a bright sunny afternoon when I reached this village, and I was told that a bazaar was being held that particular day, this being a weekly event. I was glad to buy some provisions, such as a few potatoes, bringals, onions, a little goats' meat and some rice.

Fardapur, which we reached towards dusk, is a small village of great antiquity, and the remains of the old fort are now used as a village rest-house, called Caravanserai, which was probably built at the time of Emperor Aurangzeb or even earlier, by the Marathas. This village being the first border village in H.E.H. the Nizam's territory, the Mohammedan rulers fortified it against invasion from the north by constructing several forts.

The river Baghora, issuing from the Ajanta caves, runs through the village of Fardapur ; the inhabitants wash and bathe in it, and drink its water. The bullocks, buffaloes, and in fact all cattle, also drink and lie in this stream, and in the summer there is very little water. In the monsoon, or rainy season, the water gets very dirty and muddy, but I had not forgotten to bring a filter with me. The population of this village is not more than three to four hundred consisting of Hindus and Mussulmans, some of whom are occupied in cultivating cotton and maize ; others are day labourers, blacksmiths, shoemakers and washermen. Unfortunately an ugly looking cotton mill has recently been erected on the roadside, near the village, and this has greatly spoilt the picturesque aspect of what would otherwise be a secluded romantic spot.

By the evening I arrived at the travellers' bungalow, and occupied the room where I had previously stayed with my Japanese friends ; but this time I was alone.



VILLAGERS. FRAGMENT. CIRCULAR SIZE. 11 $\frac{1}{2}$ " - 8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

PROBABLY FROM CAVE 10. AIA. 1A.

Original in the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, U.S.A.



JATAKA STORY : CAPTURING THE WHITE ELEPHANT
Cave 10

Narayan arrived a little later with the cart and the rest of the luggage, and we began preparations for the evening meal.

We were soon faced with many difficulties. Water had to be fetched from the river, which was a good distance away. There was wood to be gathered; and fresh provisions, such as milk and eggs, could only be bought at and fetched from the village. From next morning, however, I was able to settle down to begin my work, and now my daily visits to the caves began.

At this travellers' bungalow at Fardapur anyone can stay, by paying a hali-rupee per day (this coin is a little lower in value than the Indian rupee—about thirteen annas), provided that there is a room vacant and not occupied by any of the Government officials. Anyway, one has to take one's own bedding, food, and servants.

Except for a dak-bungalow built by the Nizam's Government, accommodation for tourists and students is difficult to obtain, as there is no hotel or boarding house at or near these celebrated cave-temples. While touring over Ceylon, I was delighted to notice many first-class public rest-houses and hotels scattered all over the island and near every place of interest. Such an establishment at or near the caves would be highly welcome and should not, I think, prove to be without profit to the owner.

The situation was much easier for me this time, as I knew my way to the caves, and had gained some experience from my previous visit to the treasures which they contained.

Chapter Five

I BEGIN MY WORK IN THE CAVES

IN the course of the third century B.C. a few of the great Buddhist mendicant monks and wandering friars called *Bhikkhus* found it necessary to form a *Sangha*—a collective religious order for the worship of the Lord Buddha and the practice of religious discipline.

They searched eagerly for out-of-the-way retreats from the noisy world, and in the course of their wanderings they came upon this beautiful spot in the gorge near Ajanta. The word Ajanta is significant for it means 'a place unknown to the world'. A few natural cavities in the hillside suggested the possibility of carving out the rocky scarp to form temples, monastic cells, chapels and dormitories, where they could study and meditate in peace.

Soon the fame of the group of saintly men settled here spread over the country and to this spot came pious and learned men, the rich among whom helped to endow a university in this ravine, where religion, philosophy, art, ethics, medicine and other arts and sciences could be studied.

The centre of this university was a ~~charan-~~^{chaitya} cathedral, which was exclusively devoted to ceremonial worship, and is now known as chaitya cave 10. It was cut out of a large single piece of rock in the sheer side of the cliff, and must have cost infinite labour over a number of years, thousands of carvers cutting away the rock with hammers and chisels.

Before beginning my work at the caves I made a preliminary survey of these ancient rock-temples, so

as to form an idea of how to proceed most conveniently and profitably with my studies. I decided to begin by copying the wall-paintings, starting with the most primitive and working gradually up to the highly-developed ones, and I hoped that in this way I should be able to follow properly the different stages in the growth of this great school of Indian Art.

The oldest group of caves at Ajanta lies in the middle of the crescent-shaped hill ; and cave 10, with its great semicircular arch and gate-window, and the rest of this central group of six caves must have been the first ones to be excavated. This can be surmised from the fact that the rock is at that point much smoother and more perpendicular than anywhere else, and the smooth surface extends almost to the bottom of the ravine.

Cave 10 is a large chaitya, chapel or cathedral of worship, and is the deepest and loftiest of all the caves at Ajanta. It looks from the outside like a single great, open gate, and possesses no porch or specially-made top window for light as does its companion, chaitya cave 9, on its right. It measures ninety-five feet long by forty-one feet wide, and thirty-six feet high, and was once fitted with gorgeous and ornamental wooden ribs on the top and wooden doors and windows. There are twenty-nine pillars surrounding the cave, with plain octagons without ornamental bases or capitals. It appears that the whole of this cave was once covered with a very thick white plaster, and was completely painted, at a very early period, probably from 350 to 200 B.C.

The triforium belt above the pillars was also painted with figures, but very little traces of them now remain. In these early days a Buddhist shrine did not contain any image, but was a plain, semicircular shaped dome,

commonly called a dagoba, but technically known as a stupa, which was made of a huge mound of earth ornamented outside with bricks, terra-cotta and stone. A dome-shaped stupa carved in solid stone is found in every chaitya cave at Ajanta. In this early cave the stupa is perfectly plain and simple, with a lower base more than fifteen feet in diameter. The square-shaped casket for the relic on the stupa in this cave was cut out of the rock and still retains its original form, but the beautiful wooden canopy with lotus leaves carved on it, which was fixed on its top, and the wooden ribs which once adorned the roof of this cave have now all perished. Innumerable combs of wild bees still hang down from the top of the cave front. Wild parrots, pigeons and bats fly in and out at will. Within, despite the spaciousness, the air is foul, but the light is good.

There is an inscription over the right-hand top corner in the front part of this great chaitya cave 10. The characters are very early Middle-Indo-Aryan, resembling Pali type, rather large and crude. It reads, 'Basathipūtasa Kamadito Ghara Mukha Danam', which means, 'The gift of a house door front by Basathiputra'. Probably this chaitya was excavated by one of the powerful ancient Andhra Kings, or a very rich merchant, Basathiputra, of this early period of the third century B.C.

Most of the important paintings on the wall of this cave-temple have now practically vanished. Cheap varnish was applied to them by some officers who copied them previously from time to time. The object of the application of varnish was to bring out the colours, but the final effect has been that the fine fragments have turned completely black within a short time; and whatever remained has been scribbled over by the common village people who visit the caves.

In this rock-cut temple one can still just recognize, although they have been almost completely destroyed, the illustrations of the Jataka tales which are stories of the previous incarnations of the Buddha. There are also painted on the walls the stories of the six-tusked elephant and other Buddhist legends. As the story goes, the Bodhisatva (the name of the Buddha in a previous birth) was the chief elephant of a great herd of eight thousand in the Himalayas. They dwelt near Lake Shadhubata in a golden cave, amid pools of white lilies, blue, white and red lotuses, and thickets of red paddy, fields of melons and of many other herbs and plants. Pure white was the chief elephant, with red feet and face and a trunk like a silver rope, and his name was Chadanta or the 'Six-tusked one'. He had two queens, Kulasuvada and Mahasuvada. Once whilst taking a walk with his queens he struck a sal tree with his forehead and a shower of twigs and red ants fell upon Kulasuvada, but on her rival fell only flowers and pollen.

Kulasuvada thought that Mahasuvada was the favourite wife, and nursed a grievance against her. She prayed to the gods that she might be reborn as a beautiful maiden and become the Queen of Benares, for she said to herself: 'I shall be lovely in the King's eyes and then I shall do what I please. I will speak to him and he shall send a hunter with a poisoned arrow to wound and slay the elephant and bring me a pair of his tusks which give forth six-coloured rays.'

Thenceforth she took no food and, pining away, died. The gods granted her prayer, and in due time she was reborn, became the Queen of Benares, and asked of her Lord a boon, which she would not reveal until all the King's huntsmen were assembled. Then she

proclaimed her wicked intention of securing the tusks of Chadanta. The chief hunter, Sonuta, whom she sent, took all necessary weapons with him, attired himself in the yellow robes of a holy man and, after travelling for seven years, shot the royal elephant with a poisoned arrow ; but he was unable to cut off the tusks, although the elephant lay down and let him climb up his trunk. The elephant himself pulled the tusks out with his trunk, and gave them to the hunter, who departed. But before the other elephants could reach him Chadanta had died.

Sonuta returned, and when the tusks were brought to the Queen she cried : ' Do you tell me he is dead ? '

' Rest assured he is dead,' was the answer.

She laid the tusks in her lap, and thinking that these were the tusks of one who in her former existence had been her dear Lord, she was filled with so great a sorrow that she could not bear it ; and then and there her heart broke, and she died.

In a portion of the painting on the right wall of this chaitya cave 10 is seen the hunter discharging his arrow, the huge six-tusked elephant lying down, and one hunter engaged in collecting the six tusks, while another arranges them in a bamboo sling to carry them away.

In the upper drawing is shown a herd of elephants disporting themselves in the jungle amidst lotus flowers, asoka and banyan trees, among them being the six-tusked elephant represented as much larger than any of the others, and white. The body of this elephant is dotted all over with small brown spots, which give a realistic imitation of the texture of the hide.

In the lower drawing the hunter is seen on the left ; he has reached the crest of the golden ridge and comes

upon the huge elephant. Next, to the right are the King and Queen of Benares, seated on bamboo stools, very common even today in India, surrounded by their female attendants and two hunters, one carrying the six tusks hanging in a bamboo sling balanced across his shoulder. The Queen at the sight of the tusks turns away and appears stricken with remorse, while the King and her maidens endeavour to console her.

Farther to the right, the King and Queen are seated on chairs which seem quite modern, and the two hunters with their hands in a suppliant attitude approach them. The King is addressing them, while the Queen appears to wish to draw the King's attention to the pilgrim on the right resting on his long staff.

In the next scene the Queen, seated once more on a circular bamboo stool, appears to be still grieving. The King stands in front, consoling her, while her maidens, two standing and one sitting, are listening to their conversation. Behind the Queen is a couch or bed. The next scene represents the King and Queen with their maidens walking in the garden. One maiden is picking fruit from a tree.

The painting to the right of this is entirely destroyed, but it is believed to have represented the Queen's death from a broken heart.

This story of the six-tusked elephant has been illustrated on the walls more than once at Ajanta, and in this case these early artists depicted it in a narrative form, with a certain number of connecting links between the various episodes. The paintings here belong to the most primitive school of Buddhist art, and therefore I thought it was the best place at which to start copying.

The ground upon which these early paintings were executed was a very thin white lime plaster, about the

thickness of an egg-shell, on the smooth surface of the rock wall ; it is smoother here in cave 10 than in any other of the caves of this series at Ajanta. Some of them face the open air and are exposed to the action of both sun and rain, and their sombre remains are also covered with innumerable names, dates, stains of varnish and other obstacles to preservation. On a recent visit to the caves, however, I was glad to see that certain portions of the 'wall-paintings of this cave 10 were covered with glass, and I hope that, gradually, all the paintings will be under glass cover. The paintings on the east side of the octagonal pillars in this cave, however, although much damaged by weather and scribbles are clearly visible. They represent the Buddha standing upright in the act of preaching or of benediction. Some are just over a foot in size, while others are almost as large as life. These paintings of the Buddhas seem of a much later date than the paintings on the gallery walls, and probably date as late as the sixth or seventh century A.D. The dark sweeping lines of the drapery and of the hands, eyes and limbs are very interesting and of a vigorous and advanced technique, but the folds of the yellow robes of the Buddhas are drawn in traditional convention.

Some of these paintings have clearly been painted over the thin surface of fine early paintings. The paintings between the ribs of the aisles were also executed at a much later date than the excavation of this cave 10, probably the fourth or fifth century A.D., or about the same time as the paintings on the pillars. But it is curious that about twenty fragments of more modern inscriptions, painted in dark brown or red colour, have been found in this cave, some painted over the older work on the walls, but most of them on the pillars.

These inscriptions refer to the figures of the Buddha. Now only a few fragments of lettering remain. Probably these figures were painted by the disciples of the Buddha or by the Bhikkhus.

I selected a portion of the frescoes on the left wall, which was clearly visible in the daylight, for careful inspection, but first rubbed off some of the dust from



WOMEN ATTENDANTS, CAV. 10

the surface with a clean moist handkerchief. A miracle happened! Suddenly I saw a fragment of excellent drawing of a long almond-shaped eye, a nose and eyebrows and so on, for a few seconds only, for as soon as the moisture evaporated the picture vanished. I chose this piece of painting to copy and, after having had a good look, I hung a sheet of thin tracing paper from the top of it with adhesive beeswax on the bare stone wall serving as drawing pins, so that the original fresco was not touched at all. Standing on the folding step-ladder I rolled up the tracing paper from the painting, looked at the drawing very carefully, and tried

to understand all the outlines bit by bit ; then slowly I unrolled the tracing paper and began to trace the lines very gently.

Gradually I saw a most charming picture of a King, Queen and Princess, and their women attendants, forming part of a procession, two carrying relic caskets and one a pitcher of sacred water and some other objects. Another is holding an umbrella over the casket and the King. The royal party are watching the sacred Bodhi tree hung with offerings, while on the other side are the worshippers. The Bodhi tree is the symbol of enlightenment. Here also is depicted the hunting of a huge serpent on the edge of a forest. Everyone, from the King to the little boy, is arrayed in jewelled robes, necklaces and arm-bands. The drawing is very sensitive, but strikingly strong and true to life ; and there is a shy realism throughout, notably in the delicate finger tips, the speaking eyes and the heads and pearl ornaments. All these suggest that the long-forgotten artists of these early dates possessed a freshness of vision and a freedom from conventionality, and indicate that they were perhaps the moderns of their days. I made two copies of this fine painting and I am most happy that my second copy found a permanent home in the British Museum in London. (See Plate VII.)

These caves have not yet received recognition as an invaluable national treasure house, which indeed they are as they contain a great wealth of art that has no equal anywhere else in the world. A National School of Art should have been started here for the most advanced students for the research study of Indian Art. In any other civilized country they would have received all the care modern science could bestow on them,

for they cannot be replaced. What has been lost already cannot be replaced. Full-size coloured reproductions of the paintings, particularly of details of heads, fingers, feet, drapery, limbs, etc., would be of invaluable service to art studies. All these should be made available to the public at a reasonable price. They would sell well all over the world. Above all, modern scientific means should be found to preserve what remains of these glorious paintings from further decay and deterioration.

Chapter Six

THE BEGINNING OF THE CAVE-TEMPLES

WHEN the followers of the Buddha had actually founded their university by cutting out of the "rock a large chaitya, number 10, other monks heard about this institution and came to Ajanta from various parts of India. Their patrons gave large donations, and another cave was excavated—the second chapel for worship by the side of the mighty temple number 10.

This new chaitya is now known as cave 9. In that early period of the Buddhist civilization, between 300 and 200 B.C., people were more concerned with the practice of righteousness than with comfortable living in a vihara. The two graceful chaityas were made and became famous. The small group of Buddhists, or the Sangha as it is called, grew larger every day, and the silent air of the lonely wooded gorge was filled with prayers and chints.

Though this new temple is only about half the size of the neighbouring chaitya, 10, it is none the less most important. It is the lowest in position on the side of the cliff and the smallest in the series of Ajanta caves. Over the front doorway there was cut a spacious opening, forming a window about twelve feet high, admitting light into the interior of the cave. This window, in shape something like a lotus leaf, forms the upper part of the porch upon which it rests, and which separates it from the main entrance down below. It forms a great contrast to its other and, earlier companion, cave 10, in that the whole of the front is open, which is quite unique.

The façade of this chaitya is covered with carvings of various figures of the Buddha, stupas and lotus-petal ornaments like that of the window, all of which are still in good condition. Though finely worked, the carvings are quite unobtrusive and in entire harmony with their surroundings. Recently the rubbish heaps and debris of broken stones which had accumulated in front of it have been cleared away, and a little stone wall has been made. The road from one cave to another is properly built now and kept quite clean.

On the left-hand side, in a recess by the window, there is a most charming group of carvings, depicting the Buddha, seated, and preaching to the assembled princes and monks, who are standing. This is balanced on the right-hand side by other figures of the Buddha, both standing and sitting. All these sculptures were probably added at a later date, perhaps in the fourth or fifth century of the Christian era.

From the outside it would seem that there had once been a great deal of woodwork in the front, which has all perished, and in the carved ornaments over the porch and everywhere else there appears to have been much copying of the wooden structures. In olden days in India palaces and large mansions were as a rule made mainly of blocks of stone and wood, with huge beams and rafters; these being unsuited to the extremes of climate—heat, cold and torrential rains—have perished, but still in many parts of the land the Indians love to live in gorgeously decorated wooden houses, so that these structures were meticulously copied in stone. This style is even now used by Northern Indians for palaces and temples. It is this sort of traditional form which we see exemplified in the chaitya caves 9 and 10, and in other caves too. Though light enters freely through

the spacious top window in this 'chapel, the interior is nevertheless religiously dim.

This cave measures forty-five feet long by twenty-three feet wide inside, and is twenty-three feet high. Two rows of massive octagonal columns, without base or capital, joining in a semicircle at the end, divide the side aisles and a huge stupa, seven feet in diameter, the chief object of worship in this sanctuary, is set in the rounded apse. The dome-shaped stupa stands on a plain cylindrical base about five feet high, resembling a magician's crystal. The dome itself is also about five feet high, and supports a carving resembling a reliquary, this having at one time been surmounted by a wooden canopy, now long since perished.

The side aisles are flat-roofed, and were once covered with decorative paintings of varied designs, of which now hardly a trace remains. In cave 9 too, as in cave 10, the pillars are enriched with paintings of the Buddha standing, and some of these are exceedingly beautiful. They are nearly as old as those in cave 10. The Buddha, his head surrounded by a halo, is shown together with ~~disciples~~, worshippers, kings and queens, and snake-kings with cobra hoods, together with traces of early types of buildings, stupas, and triple canopies—all most interesting as depicting the earliest type of Indian life found in the art of painting. Unfortunately, the meaning of many of these paintings has not yet been discovered. The whole of the cave was once covered with a kind of white lime plaster, upon which all the paintings were executed.

These pictures show us the peculiar way in which turbans were worn in those early days. They were interwoven with the wearer's long, black hair and decorated with massive ornaments, and were worn

in this way by both men and women. I have heard that on occasions calling for royal court dress, these turbans were made with false hair. Perfect illustrations of the costumes and manners of those days are found in large numbers both in this cave and in cave 10.



HUNTERS, CAVE 10

The friezes along the tops of the pillars are most interesting. They show great vitality and movement, the cowherd running after his bulls, the tiger pursuing the cowherd, all perfect in design and highly finished in colouring ; the children also are drawn very vivaciously. It is a great pity that not many more of these marvellous paintings are now left.

In a great many places the upper layer of the paint has fallen off, revealing underneath fragments of much earlier pictures, so it would seem that they have been painted one on the top of the other. The reason for this we do not know, which is rather disappointing ; but with careful examination we can still find the

narratives of the Jataka tales in the painting on the walls.

Numerous fragments of painted inscriptions—as many as sixteen—have been found in this cave. They are in very early scripts. These, however, are not in a good state of preservation, so very little of them can be read, but they are of much later date than the paintings, and might be of the fifth or sixth century A.D.



A KING, QUEEN AND PRINCESS WITH WOMEN AND DWARFS

In the Oriental Department of the British Museum.



FAÇADE OF CAVE II



VERANDA OF CAVE II

Chapter Seven

THE CAVES

ON either side of chaityas 9 and 10, on the hillside, were numerous caverns and recesses which used to be occupied by holy men long before the days of the Buddha. Gradually the earlier hermits died out and were succeeded in their rude cave-dwellings by the Buddhist monks.

By degrees the natural caves proved to be insufficient for providing shelter for the increasing number of monks, so they started to enlarge the available space by cutting away the rock and also made low stone benches for seats and beds, and cells all round for the high priests, each cell having stone beds and a low doorway.

Very soon reports of the monks' hardship spread to the cities. The noble and rich people of those days made generous gifts and the best professional architects, masons and artists were employed to hew out temples and decorate their interiors with paintings and sculptures. Out to the gorge came hundreds of craftsmen, labourers, artists and artisans, with paints and brushes, hammers and chisels, tools and implements borne by processions of elephants, and hubbub arose in the depths of the ravine at Ajanta. The simple monks themselves also laboured hard, side by side with the workers who had been sent to help them. Gradually the monks' rough dwellings were transformed into monasteries that were gorgeous in comparison, and were embellished with marvellous paintings on their walls and ceilings.

These caves of the first group were not all completed at one time, as the monks, who loved peace, could not

abide the noisy working men and the clamour of the building operations while they were living in the monasteries. It was only during the two seasons, the hot and the rainy, that the monks did not go out to the villages to preach and beg for alms. In the other more favourable seasons—about eight or nine months in the year—they and their disciples were scattered over various parts of the country, and only met together again for about three months. During the hot and wet seasons they were accustomed to take shelter at the headquarters in these monasteries to discuss schemes for various undertakings of piety and charity in the coming year.

During their absence as a body, for eight or nine months, only a few old and venerable head priests and students remained to take care of the place ; and the excavations of the monasteries and temples could then proceed properly.

When two chaityas had been more or less completed, the monks turned their attention to some more of the surrounding caves for their own residences. The natural recesses to the right of chaitya 9 and the left of chaitya 10 were first dealt with, and workmen were soon busy turning them into habitable places. The caves to the left of chaitya 10 were numbers 11, 12, and 13 ; and to the right of chaitya 9 were viharas 8 and 7. Altogether five viharas, or monastery halls, were then completely excavated, three to the left and two to the right of chaityas 9 and 10, forming the first group of seven caves at Ajanta. These were done during the two centuries which preceded the birth of Christ.

Number 12 is one of the oldest of the monasteries. It is considered to have taken for excavation and completion the period of time covering about two centuries

before and three and a half centuries after the birth of Christ, and it is probably of the same age as caves 9 and 10. The front of this cave has fallen away with the veranda, and there now remains only a hall thirty-eight feet square, without any pillars or internal supports to the flat roof.

There are four cells on each of the three inner sides and, within, eleven double beds and raised pillows to sleep on, are cut in stone. There are marks of holes for pivot hinges in the sills and lintels of the doorway and others in the jambs for fastenings, which show that this cave was a large sleeping chamber or dormitory and that the monks took sufficient precautions to keep out the tigers and other wild animals during the night, by closing the entrance and windows with wooden doors and shutters.

The upper portion of the walls above the cell doors is beautifully ornamented with the oldest type of canopy, somewhat like a lotus petal in shape, representing the chaitya window. This vihara no doubt was the first of all the early series to be properly finished. It is now in a very ruined state and there is no trace of paintings on the walls or ceiling; also, probably because it was a vihara of a very early type, no sculptures, paintings or images for worship were introduced in it. However, there is a short inscription in the early Pali language, in three lines, to the left of one of the cell doors in the back wall, which reads: 'The meritorious gift of a dwelling with cells and hall by the merchant Ghanamadada.'

To the immediate left of vihara 12 is another ancient little vihara now known as cave 13, which also is entirely lacking in paintings. This was originally another natural hole in the hillside, and even now it looks very

much like one from the outside. Like vihara 12, the front has completely fallen away. It was only a Bhikkhu's room, or small residence of a holy man, who lived here and whose sanctity might have attracted others to the spot. Later on this space was properly excavated into a plain hall, with polished walls but without pillars, about fourteen feet wide by seventeen feet deep and only seven feet high. It has seven cells with stone beds, as in cave 12. One can feel how cool and pleasant it must have been to rest here on those stone beds in the dark during the bright, hot summer days.

Then comes a very small vihara cave, 8, which also must have been a natural cavern from very ancient times. It was built almost immediately on the completion of chaitya 9. This monastery is the first one to be reached when one mounts the ancient steps from the stream at the bottom, and is situated at the lowest level in the hill. The whole of the front has fallen away and what remains is nothing but plain, bare rock. The hall is thirty-two feet long, seventeen feet wide, and only ten feet in height. There are two cells at each end and two on each side of the antechamber of the shrine. There is a low door leading to the dark antechamber in which there is no image of any kind—nothing but a low stone bench at the back.

The largest natural cavern in this series, to the right of cave 8, was also turned into a good vihara and is now known as cave 7. On approaching this monastery one can see that there are two porches, each supported by octagonal pillars surmounted with lotus-flower capitals and, in spite of its porches being much damaged, it still looks beautiful. It was quite large and comfortable, but was finished at a much later date, probably in the third or fourth century A.D.

The frieze along the front above the columns is carved with miniature chaitya ornamental windows of the shape used in all the chaityas. This cave measures sixty-three feet long by fourteen feet wide, and is only about ten feet high, and has no hall. From its shape it really forms nothing but a very long veranda. On each side of the veranda is a room on a slightly higher level than the floor, with two pillars in the doorway, and these rooms contain more cells. In the back wall of the veranda are four other cells, apparently excavated as living rooms for the honoured guests of the university. Right at the back, in the centre of the wall between these cells, is an antechamber leading to the shrine, where sits a colossal statue of the Buddha Deva, cross-legged on a lion throne, his right hand raised in the act of benediction. On each side of the door of the sanctuary are eight good sculptures of the Buddha standing, and four worshippers. On the right and left sides of the shrine are very many sculptures of the Buddha in rows, seven in a row, sitting and standing on a lotus, and the lotus leaves between them. The stem of the lowest and central lotus is upheld by two kneeling figures wearing royal head-dresses : probably they represent the donors of this cave.

Once the whole of this rock-cut temple was covered with beautiful paintings, for during the whole of the day it is well lighted, and a good many very faint fragments of paintings still remain on the back wall, but no artist has yet ventured to copy them and discover their subjects.

Much higher up the cliff on the left of chaitya cave 10 was another natural cavern of rather a beautiful residence for the high priests of chaitya 10. This was especially convenient for them, as they would be close

to the place of their religious duties. This vihara 11 is much smaller in size than chaitya 10, and might be either exactly contemporary with or made a few years later than its companion.

Its general appearance from outside is quite plain and simple, and in keeping with its neighbours of this early period. Its antiquity is shown by the rubbed edges of the flight of small steps leading up to it. A peculiar feature of its front is the veranda which shuts it in. At one time the whole of this cave, both roof and walls, was elaborately painted; unfortunately, with the exception of a few places, these paintings have almost entirely disappeared from the rest of the walls surrounding the cave. Whatever survived has been obliterated not long ago by some persons who, pretending to be holy men, lived in this cave and daubed the walls with clay and cow-dung.

The doorway is plain and less decorative. The steps leading to the hall, however, are adorned with two lions' heads. On either side of this door is a large square window, divided by two pillars. This cave, though small, receives some light, especially towards the afternoon. On the left of the door there had once been a lovely painting of a tall, standing Buddha on a bluish-black ground, his robe held gracefully in his left hand. Much of the remaining painting seems to consist of the pictures of the Buddha and of the Prince Gautama. By the side of the door is a painting of the Prince Gautama holding some lilies in his left hand and above this are some fine figure designs. On the right side also is a similar figure, but not in such a good state of preservation. The ceiling of the veranda still bears the remains of a good deal of painting—figures, flowers, birds and other decorative designs.

At either end of the veranda is a cell containing some good bas-relief sculptures depicting seated images of the Buddha. The inside hall is about thirty-seven feet long by twenty-eight feet wide, and ten feet high, with a flat ceiling supported in the centre by four octagonal columns. Opening into the hall are eight cells, three on the left, three on the right, and two in the back wall, one on either side of the central sanctuary. The sanctuary which opens directly from the cave is a room about fifteen feet square. The statue of the Buddha is not cut against the wall, but stands at a little distance from it, so that the monks could encircle it at their prayers. The huge statue of the Buddha here is carved seated on a throne with two charmingly-carved deer on either side of the round halo of the wheel, and two lions behind them. Above are depicted flying figures. In front of this image of the Buddha is a beautiful natural stone carving of a man kneeling in adoration with an offering in his hands : this probably represents the donor of this cave.

It is most wonderful that towards the evening, the last rays of the sun fall upon the face of the Buddha, so that it is suddenly lit up as if with divine ecstasy.

High up on the wall and scarcely visible, on the left side of the sanctuary, is an aperture opening into a secret cell—a pitch-dark recess, fearful and mysterious, and unique in the whole series of caves at Ajanta.

Chapter Eight

MY SERVANT'S DEATH

LONG before the sun rose I used to get up and call my servant, Narayan, and while he went to the village to buy eggs and milk for breakfast, I would fetch water from the stream and collect wood for a fire. Water had been scarce during the summer, but now the monsoon was coming over the land, and the tiny little river Baghora was getting swifter every day, losing its crystal transparency in a dark muddy torrent. While my servant cooked the breakfast I completed dressing, winding the puttees up my legs. Well before eight o'clock, having warned Narayan to boil and filter the drinking water, I used to start on a tour round the caves from the Fardapur dak-bungalow.

My morning and evening diversion was to try to discover a shorter track through the undulating and rough ground to and from the caves, and it was not long before I found a few light trails made by the soft hooves of wild cattle and boars, which led there much quicker than the old twisting and winding paths.

In the dark caves, by the light of a petrol lamp, I would stand the whole day copying the frescoes from the walls. At noon a boy or a man would come with a lunch basket on his head, looking flustered, breathing through his open mouth to show how tired the long walk from the village had made him. Almost every day on opening the basket I found that more than half my food had vanished ; sometimes only a few little bones were lying in the gravy. It was no good saying anything to the men, as the answer always was, ' It has fallen

off". Padlock or no padlock, the food-bearer always had his share. In despair I asked Narayan to bring my lunch to the caves, but the result was that the poor man had not sufficient time to prepare an evening meal for me in the village bungalow.

The chowkidars, or caretakers of the caves, who came every day from the village of Ajanta, used to leave the caves early, long before sunset. This puzzled me, until they advised me to leave with them, saying that on several occasions tigers had crossed their path, even at twilight. I did not take much notice of this warning, but worked on until it was dark.

Within a couple of months I had made one or two copies of the frescoes and some tracings from the walls and was copying a large piece of painting which represented the birth of the Buddha on the left wall of cave 2.

One evening, just as the sun was setting, I was alone in the caves, the chowkidars having already departed. At last I put out my petrol lamp by which I had been working the whole day, and prepared to leave for the bungalow. Suddenly I was surprised to see the cave grow gradually brighter and brighter, until it became much brighter than by the artificial lamp light, so that I was able to compare comfortably my copy with the original painting on the wall, and criticize the colours which looked different by artificial light. Greatly astonished, I walked round the cave, seeing clearly each fresco on the walls, until the cave sank into darkness.

The next day I waited to see whether this phenomenon would be repeated, and about the same time as the evening before, the whole cave lit up for a very brief while and then darkness fell. The reason for this is that towards evening the last rays of the descending

sun are reflected on the hills opposite. The idea occurred to me to spread sheets of paper or cloth where they might reflect sunlight into the dark cave and on to the frescoed walls. Thus many a time I saved petrol.

The monsoon broke, and the river issuing from the caves grew sometimes into an impassable, roaring torrent, and one morning it was so swollen that to cross it to reach the caves was impossible, and I had to return to the bungalow and remain inactive for two days. Narayan and I planned after a long discussion to move to the caves and live there, renewing our store of food once a week from the nearest bazaar at Vakod. As soon as the rain stopped a little and the torrent grew quiet, we packed up and left the bungalow and came to live in cave 7, which had once been the home of the Buddhist monks. Here I felt happy, as I had more time to do my work.

Now in the monsoon the waterfall by the extreme western caves became swollen and thundering, and all day and night I could hear it. Mists and clouds passed over the hills and clung to their tops, and shivered through the thick green trees, but, sometimes, like magic a lovely deep blue sky would appear between the two hill slopes, and the golden rays of the morning sun shone on the leaves in the forest and were reflected as from tiny mirrors. The peacocks screamed and strutted along, and the whole forest and surroundings looked wonderful. Monkeys, porcupines and mongooses passed by the stream and even snakes swam in the water. Frogs of all kinds were always leaping about. The silence of the dark night was broken by their loud croaking and the noisy murmur of trees swaying in the wind.

I was wrapped in a sort of artistic ecstasy, keenly

interested in the wonderful old pictures, living in the atmosphere created by the ancient Buddhists who founded their monasteries and performed their religious duties on this extraordinary site.. But on poor Narayan came a change. He was getting tired of living alone in the jungles. He hardly talked or smiled. During the whole week he looked forward to the bazaar day at Vakod, and when it came he smiled, put on his clean turban and best clothes, took the money and started off early in the morning. At evening he returned with some fresh meat and vegetables; and we thoroughly enjoyed very good food that night and next day : the meat could not be kept after that.

Narayan looked sad, and I failed to make him smile, and he began to ask me : ' Sahib, when shall we finish the business here ? How long will your work take ? Aren't we going home soon ? ' Life was becoming very lonely and difficult for him. One day he took money, went to the bazaar, and did not come back for three days, while I starved, practically, living only on barley water. When at last he did arrive he was in a bad state—no clothes, no turban, no food, no money ! I was horrified to find him like this. He said very quietly, bowing his head : ' Everything was stolen from me ! ' It was no good scolding him, for he might have run away from me altogether. Then he pressed me to let us go back to the bungalow at the village of Fardapur now that the monsoon was over. Finally he prevailed upon me and we moved back to the village again.

Now the heavy downpour of rain had almost come to an end, and the sun began to shine brightly and as hot as ever. The moist, warm vapour rose from the earth and there ensued an unhealthy season. The village roads were knee-deep in clay and mud. The

heaps of 'rubbish and cow-dung' around the houses accumulated everywhere. The river became thick and muddy. Finally cholera broke out all round the villages and, at last, in Fardapur itself.

One morning, after breakfast, as I was leaving for my day's work at the caves, Narayan came to me saying, 'Sahib, there is cholera in the village'. I strictly enjoined him not to go there, and once more emphasized that he was on no account to neglect the boiling and filtering of the water.

That night when I returned from my work, I found to my amazement a gorgeous welcome. The bath water was hot, the drinking water in the filter was full, the supper was prepared with home-made rolls and scones, and not merely special chops, but also a plate full of pudding with cream and custard. Having enjoyed this unexpected comfort, I became aware of Narayan hovering nervously in the background. He was evidently very uneasy about something, but he could not make up his mind to speak. At last, 'Sahib,' he said in a very weak voice, as he stood behind me, 'I do not feel well'. My suspicions were aroused.

There had been cases of cholera in the village, and I had forbidden him to go near it. He had disobeyed me! I felt uneasy myself lest he might be sickening of that dread disease. He looked very ill. He brought his blanket and, wrapping himself in its folds, lay down on the ground by my side. I opened my medicine chest, for now I felt sure it was cholera he was suffering from, and gave him a dose of the remedy I had brought with me. But alas, it was too late. He was past human aid, yet I struggled and fought for his life all that night alone in the bungalow. He sank very rapidly, became unconscious, and as the morning dawned he passed away.

I was left alone with the corpse of this poor man, and not a soul would come near, for the very word cholera was enough to make the villagers flee from the place. But it was essential that he should be buried decently. With the kind help of the Patel Sahib of Fardapur and wholesale bribery and extra money for drinks, I prevailed on several of the stouter of the villagers to dig a grave. Wrapped in clean white muslin and his blanket we laid him to rest in the shadow of the rocks near the sandy banks of the Baghara river.

That evening seemed to me too terrible. The blood-red sun as usual went down beyond the deep-blue Vindhya range, casting long, gloomy shadows everywhere. The air was stifling, drowsy and still. I felt sad and lonely.

I came back to the bungalow and realized that neither food, water nor anything else was safe to touch. The same night I went away for a few days' change of air at Nagpur, intending to see Narayan's people, and to bring back another servant with me. Many offered their services, but as soon as they heard that they would have to stay in the jungle they did not wish to come. One of the younger servants agreed, however, but I did not employ him lest he should make the same mistake as Narayan, going too much to the village for companionship and drink and thereby catching the deadly diseases of cholera or plague.

Then at Nagpur one afternoon, while I lay smoking in an armchair and thinking about returning to the caves, there approached a tall old man with a big grey moustache, dressed in a clean white coat, turban and trousers, who gave me a salute and held out a bundle of old letters. These testimonials showed that he had served many of the high officials and had been head cook

to the Chief Commissioner of Nagpur. Then he said, 'I am too old, nobody gives me work, Sahib ; give me some money as *bakhshish*'. I rather liked his look and explained all about my sojourn in the jungle and the camp life of Ajanta, and asked him whether he would like to come to cook for me on a very good salary. He said eagerly, assuring me, 'Yes, sir, I know all about those jungle places ; I shall look after you'.

So once again I returned to Ajanta, feeling cheerful at having secured such an experienced hand and thinking that old Dhandu would see to my physical comforts and I should be able to devote myself entirely to work in the caves. By this time the bungalow had been properly washed and made habitable. With renewed vigour I began to copy the frescoes in the caves.

For a day or two Dhandu cooked well ; but after a little while he began to neglect first one thing then another. He appeared to find the situation less agreeable than he had expected. His manner changed rapidly from bad to worse ; he grew sullen ; at last he forgot to answer my call ; in fact even breakfast was impossible to get. He wanted to go to Poona to his people. He said that he could not move, as he was too ill. I was disgusted and, thinking he was more a hindrance than help, I decided to put up with him no longer ; I paid his wages and railway fare and he took a hasty departure, comfortably seated in a bullock cart. At last, with difficulty, I managed to get a middle-aged local man named Buddhu Miya as cook, though he knew hardly anything about his job. However, I offered him a good wage and he stayed with me to the end.

Chapter Nine

I START MY WORK AGAIN

IN the course of centuries various other caves, which belong to the second group of six and are numbered 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, were excavated on the left side of the cliff. These excavations extended in point of time from about the birth of Christ to the fifth or sixth century A.D. about which time they were completed ; the architectural designs and inscriptions prove their date to be much later than that of the first group of caves.

High up in the rock, almost directly over cave 13 of the first group, is a large unfinished vihara, number 14, approached by a steep ascent from vihara 12. This cave has no painting or sculpture, and was excavated probably somewhere about A.D. 100. The veranda is of considerable size, as it measures about sixty-three feet long by eleven feet wide and nine feet high, and has six square pillars plainly decorated. We do not know the real reason why the hall was never finished and the front aisle only was partially cut out to the extent of about twelve feet, but we may conjecture that this was probably due to the softer character of the rock, which made it more liable to crack. At each end of the veranda are unfinished guest-chambers which give cool shelter to the visitors. Besides these a very neat central door and two windows on either side had also been cut out of the rock.

Next on the left of vihara 14, much lower down in the cliff, is a small plain vihara cave, 15. In the rainy season a hill stream from above comes down on to it

making access to it impossible. Probably for the same reason the pillars of the cave have broken away in places. The veranda is thirty feet long, six feet wide and about ten feet high and there is one cell at each end. On either side of the doorway are wonderfully good sculptures and low bas-reliefs. The hall is almost thirty-four feet square and ten feet high, without columns. At each side are four cells. Just opposite the main entrance is a sanctuary, and on the shrine is a stone image of the Buddha which was carved out from the solid rock probably a little later than the cave. It is one of the first examples of the placing of an image of the Buddha in a monastery hall ; and the date of the image may be assumed to be about A.D. 200. Evidently this cave was once fully covered with paintings, for traces of them still remain on the ceiling.

On the left, again, is cave 16, one of the most important cave-temples of Buddhist India belonging to this group. Even today, as one approaches this cave and its neighbour.¹⁷ from the bottom of the ravine, one catches a glimpse of the golden-red frescoes within. One finds there the most astonishing paintings in the world for so early a date as the second or third century A.D. The style of architecture, carving and painting is elegant and graceful. These caves are situated at a slightly greater height from the bottom of the ravine than those of the first period. It is interesting to observe how cleverly the architects of those days followed the vein of the rock where the texture was most suitable for excavation.

The large veranda of cave 16 is sixty-five feet long and twelve feet wide. Six plain octagonal columns with bracket capitals support the roof. The main entrance has two windows on each side, and here on the wall are seen carved figures of river goddesses, but the



THE DYING PRINCESS

CAVE 16



LOVERS

CAVE 17

Copy in the possession of Henry Clifford Maggs, Esquire, London



TWO GROUPS OF FLYING FIGURES
CAVE 17



By permission of the Royal Anthropological Society

THE LANDING AND CORONATION OF KING VIJAYA IN CEYLON
CAVE 17





GROUP OF MUSICIANS PASSING THROUGH —

CAVE 17

PLATE XV



HIS ARM ON HER SHOULDER
CAVE 17



KING, QUEEN AND BEGGAR
CAVE 17

paintings have perished for ever. One cell opens out from each end of the veranda. The ceiling of this cave is extensively decorated with beautiful paintings, a great part of which has unfortunately been destroyed by the ravages of time.

High up in a corner at the left end of the veranda is an inscription running to several lines, mutilated by



• THE FLUTE PLAYER, CAVE 16

the weather. The full meaning of the inscription has not hitherto been deciphered, but one can roughly make out the sense of the opening sentence : 'A king salutes first the renowned Buddha, who removed the intense fire of misery from this world.' And then it goes on to mention names of many other kings and of their habitation.

The hall is about sixty-five feet square and fifteen feet

high, i.e. higher than those of the first group. Here as many as twenty octagonal pillars support the ceiling, and their sides were once painted with wreaths of flowers and other designs. The ceiling is gorgeously carved, representing beams and rafters, the higher ends being supported by brackets in the shape of plump but almost dwarf-like boys. This is peculiar to, and common in, the Ajanta sculpture and painting. Wherever the artist found a chance he introduced such figures. Six cells spread out from each side of the interior hall, and two are in the back wall. Directly beyond the main entrance in the shrine there is seated a gigantic statue of the Buddha on a stone throne, with both legs stretched, downwards and the hands raised in a preaching position. Just as in vihara 11 of the first group, so here also a narrow passage encircles the great image to enable the pilgrims or priests to walk with devotion round the Buddha. This was, no doubt, a residence for one of the large sanghas.

In the hall a great many masterpieces of painting still exist on the walls, but they were again foolishly varnished, and are now almost ruined, so that one can hardly make them out. On the left wall in the hall is a wonderful painting of a dying princess (Plate XI), which can hardly be surpassed by anything in the history of the world's art, and also many other very good paintings—for instance, the Buddha with his mendicant's bowl teaching in a vihara, surrounded by kings and rich people, who kneel and pay him reverence. Again, on the back wall, is a grand scene of a procession of elephants, ridden by kings among attendants carrying drums and musical instruments, and soldiers with their long, curved steel blue swords. In another scene the Buddha Deva is seated on a throne, teaching a great

assembly of crowned princes and other people. On the right are several other interesting paintings from the legend of the Buddha, such as Saint Asita Muni with the infant Buddha in his lap, and the young Siddhartha



A WALL-PAINTING IN CAVE 16

at school, drawing the bow and learning sports. It breaks one's heart to see these marvellous pictures ruined through the application of varnish by thoughtless people who came to copy them.

One evening a number of monkeys appeared in front

of the cave where I was working, in search of those wild berries which are called *kul*; they are like sour cherries with a little hard stone inside. The monkeys began to slip off, but some clung to the trees or jumped from branch to branch. Suddenly some of the monkeys disappeared as if by magic. I investigated the cause



A NAGA-KING

and found they had gone down some old stone steps towards the stream. In the jungle, of course, there are no roads and one never knows to what one is coming. I followed them. In front of cave 16 I found myself in a sort of broken room. By its side was a little watering-place like a small tank or well, with water still in it. There in the chamber was a damaged statue of a Snake-King, or Naga-King, seated upon the coils of

the snake, whose five hoods spread over the King's crown like a canopy.

I descended the steps. All I could see above and in front of me was the jungle and trees. Some of the monkeys were sitting on top of these trees. I went down and down towards the little stream at the bottom. Suddenly I came upon what looked like two very huge pieces of rock, but they were two large elephants of dark stone, almost life-size. I recognized them at once. They were the two famous elephants which had once stood at the great ancient stairway leading to the monasteries and which are mentioned in a book written over a thousand years ago by one of the great Chinese pilgrims, Yuan Chwang, who travelled in India in the seventh century A.D.

The old approach to Ajanta cave 7 is the road with steps which rises from the river bank. There are similar approaches to caves 16 and 17 also. The Bhikkhus and travellers used to go up these roads and steps to reach the caves, but they are now covered with forest growth and stones and boulders of all kinds. It has been a matter of great disappointment to me that these have been abandoned. It strikes me that the care the caves have been receiving is not always in keeping with the layout and artistic scheme of the place. These roads and steps just fit in with that scheme, and the artists and builders of the caves particularly designed and executed them to go with the rest. It is not easy, therefore, to discard or replace any of them without interfering with the general character of the place. I wish to impress this on those who have been entrusted with the care of this treasure-house of India's ancient art. All that is wanted is to revive what may still be revived, and to restore to their original condition, to

whatever extent is possible, what may still be so restored. There are no artists known who can dare to try to improve upon the works of the old masters. Indeed, for the work of repairs and restoration too a spirit similar to the devotion of the original artists and builders is necessary. I implore the authorities carrying out this work to bring to bear on it at least a little of the ancient fervour.

Next to cave 16 is cave 17, another very fine vihara of the second group of caves. It looks as if it might be a twin cave to number 16, for in size, exterior architectural appearance and the importance of its series of paintings these two are very similar. As one approaches this cave one can see through the trees the glowing red and golden colours of its frescoes.

There is a long inscription on the left-hand top of the veranda outside, of about twenty-nine lines, written in early Sanskrit verse. It would seem from this inscription and that in cave 16, that both these caves must have been made during or soon after the reign of the great Gupta Emperor, Chandra Gupta II (A.D. 380 to 415), better known by his famous title of Vikramaditya.

At the right end there is a small hole in the floor leading to a fine cistern always filled with water, formerly used by the monks for drinking purposes. It can be approached only by a flight of steps between this cave and cave 16. No doubt in olden days this hole, for safety, was covered over by a wooden lid, as can be seen by the ledge cut inside the aperture on which the lid used to rest.

There are two cells in the veranda. At the left end over the cell there is a circular piece of painting divided into eight compartments, representing the Buddhist Wheel of Life. This has been much injured by the

visitors, in their vandalismistic attempts to remove parts of the paintings from the walls. The compartments have been filled with human figures, variously employed, all representing the cycle of existence.

In more than two-thirds of the lower part of the veranda, no vestiges of frescoes remain, but on the upper part of the back wall is a good deal of painting in fragments. Over the central door is a lovely row of eight figures of the Buddha, seated cross-legged in different attitudes, the hands lifted in the act of teaching



PAINTING OVER THE DOOR OF CAVE 17

or benediction, one with a royal crown. Below, on the lintel, is a series of eight beautiful small panel designs in compartments containing two figures each representing lovers offering flowers and drink to one another, some figures with fair and some with dark complexions. (See Plate XII.)

Above the door leading into the hall of this cave 17 are two very attractive carved female figures of River-Goddesses standing on *makaras*, but all the available space in the caves was once most elaborately covered with paintings. The pillars of the veranda are plain octagon bracket capitals, but the bases are more elegantly carved than usual.

To the left and right of the veranda are groups of fairies, accompanied by a male figure floating through the air at night. (See Plate XIII.) Behind the figures are thick white clouds. Such flying figures are usually found in pairs in Buddhist sculptures and in the paintings of this age. The whole composition is perfect. In its purity of outline and the elegance of its perfect grouping it is one of the finest and most fascinating of the smaller paintings at Ajanta. The easy upward motion of the whole group is rendered in a manner that could not easily be surpassed.

To the right of the veranda wall, just on the top of the window space, is the scene in which Devadatta, the Buddha's cousin, tries to get the Buddha killed by an enraged elephant, but the huge creature kneels down with reverence at the latter's feet. The ceiling is very beautifully decorated with charming designs still preserved in good condition. On the whole this cave contains more paintings than any other cave, in spite of the fact that even here, as elsewhere, there has been much wilful destruction at the hands of visitors.

The hall is entered by a central door, resembling that in cave 16, and by two side doors. It is further lighted by two windows. This apartment is sixty-three feet wide by sixty-two feet long and thirteen feet high, its roof being supported by twenty octagonal pillars, all plain, except the two in the middle of the front and back rows, which have square bases, shafts partly octagonal and partly sixteen-sided, covered with paintings. The antechamber is small, with two figures in front, but the shrine is eighteen feet wide by twenty feet deep, and two figures stand on the floor in front of the great image, one holding a mendicant's bowl, the other totally damaged. There are also two attendants on



KING BIMBISARA, HIS QUEEN AND
ATTENDANTS, SEATED WITHIN
A PALACE PAVILION

Cave 17



THE KIMIYUJI STORY OF KING DVARATHA
AND ANDHAKA MUNI

Cave 17

By permission of the Royal India Society



A GIRL WITH A FLY-FLAPPER

By permission of the Royal India Society

CAVE 17



A HUNTER AND WILD GEESE,

JATAKA STORY



BEGGING SCENE, JATAKA STORY

CAVL. 17

By permission of the Royal India Society



THE TOILET OF A QUEEN

CAVE 17

By permission of the Royal India Society

PLATE XX



MUSICIANS, CAVE 17

each side of the Buddha and two fan-bearers. The hall has sixteen cells, and the whole interior is similar to that of number 16. Here again the roof shows the copy of a wooden model and the pillars which support it have chubby boys carved in stone as brackets.

In the hall, on the wall of the left aisle at the left end of the back wall, as everywhere in this cave, many wonderful paintings are still in existence, in spite of the ravages of smoke, dirt and varnish. There are over sixty distinct scenes of subject painting in cave 17.

In the middle of the right wall is a large piece of magnificent painting representing the legend of the landing of Prince Vijaya in Ceylon and his conquest of the island. In the left-hand corner a procession of elephants is seen rushing through the gate ; the cavalry and war elephants are crossing the Indian Ocean in boats and on the shore are the so-called demons, giant natives of Ceylon, trying to prevent their landing. It is a very large narrative composition, but the whole subject is admirably told in one picture. (See Plate XIV.)

In the upper part appears the white horse, signifying the fact that the King has now accomplished his conquest of the whole land. From very ancient times it was the custom that, before the coronation of a great King took place, a riderless white horse should be let loose over the country, followed by hundreds of soldiers, and if any other chief desired to challenge the King's right of subjection and objected to the passing of the horse through his land he should try to capture the horse. But if the horse returned unchallenged it proved the King to be the acknowledged ruler of the land, and he was then crowned.

In this painting the horse has come back unchallenged

and 'looks' proudly towards the King, while the soldiers bow. The coronation is taking place in the right-hand corner, where the King appears surrounded by beautiful dancing girls and musicians, and the *parijata* flowers are showered from above as blessings from the gods in heaven.

Although this painting represents so many scenes, they have been grouped together to form one single picture, covering the whole wall. The slanting spears, the waving flags, the forward lean of the elephant riders and the curved heads and huddled trunks of the elephants all express the emotion of a great movement. The pictures of the fight outside the city, the triumphal entry and the coronation are separated by a suggestion of a rampart. The flowers from heaven fall only on the inner side of the rampart. The oars of the boat are directed one way only, in order to emphasize the great speed at which the boat is being driven through the water.

On the left of the shrine door in this cave is another large painting, over thirteen feet high, of pre-eminent beauty and grandeur. The subject of the composition seems to be the return of the Buddha after his Enlightenment, receiving alms from his wife and son, Rahula. This is a beautiful group of a princess and a young prince, both holding out their hands before the Buddha. His glorified figure towers colossal against a blue night sky, and his feet rest on a white lotus on a deep Indian red ground. In his right hand is a begging bowl and his left hand lifts up his yellow robe. Over him an angel holds a canopy of flowers, and *parijata* flowers also fall upon him from heaven while his wife Yashodhara and his child Rahula, on a balcony of their house, look up in adoration, holding up their hands to him. The exquisite

simplicity of the whole design clearly brings out the tranquil mood of the conception. The painting is thought to date from about the fifth century A.D.

This magnificent, colossal, original painting at Ajanta must be one of the most majestic and tender paintings in the world, showing intense love and spiritual devotion, and to many it will be a revelation of the heights which Indian art has attained. Like many others, it shows what masters of animated composition and complex movements were those painters who worked in the early centuries of the Christian era. One of my copies of this painting in water colours, though only a quarter of the size of the original, was bought by the late Dr Laurence Binyon for the Prints and Drawings Gallery in the British Museum, London. (See frontispiece in colour.)

There are hundreds of painted scenes in every part of this monastery hall, and they are of great interest. One, of splendid power, depicts a hunt of lions, black bucks and elephants. The colouring is vivid, and the foliage and lotus leaves are painted with a rich green. The whole posing and grouping have an air of modernity. The animals, horses, elephants, dogs, are all extremely well drawn, and the massive colours and contours are painted with solid strokes of the brush. In all these frescoes at Ajanta, the artists found an abounding and inexhaustible joy in life and nature—in the beauty of form and movement, in men and women and animals, in the freshness of leaves, in the earth and in the sunshine ; all delighted them immensely and these painted records infuse their joy into others for all time to come.

Then comes cave 18, which is really no more than a porch, just over nineteen feet by about nine feet, and which has two pillars. Apparently it was intended for

a passage to the next cave, 19, and possibly to cover a water cistern down below. It was excavated about the same time as cave 17.

At that time hundreds of monks had gathered together here and their morning and evening prayer must have made the gorge much too noisy. They needed another chaitya cave for quiet worship and so made the temple now known as number 19 to serve as the third chaitya ; it is much smaller than cave 10, and almost the same size as 9, of the first group. So cave 19 was excavated, the only chaitya cave in the second group. It is about twenty-four feet wide by forty-six feet long by twenty-four feet high, and it is elaborately carved with sculptures and ornamental designs, both inside and out, and they are as distinct at the present time as when they were first wrought. There is only one entrance to this cave.

The whole of the composition of this rock-temple is very pleasing, and it has scarcely suffered at all from the effects of time. The decorative carving in front is very elaborate, and consists of figures of the Buddha and other images afterwards carved on the façade. From the façade of this chaitya temple projects a boldly but carefully carved cornice, broken only at the left end by the fall of a heavy mass of rock. In front was an enclosed court, thirty-three feet wide by thirty feet deep, but the left side of it has nearly disappeared.

To the right of the main entrance, by the porch, is represented a colossal bas-relief of the Buddha returning home after his Enlightenment. His wife is lifting forward her son Rahula to place alms in his father's begging bowl.

In the next compartment, he is standing in front of a stupa which is richly ornamented and surmounted

by the triple umbrella. Above, on the upper right-hand corner, he is represented again in his most usual standing attitude, preaching, his right hand hanging down, his left raised. Probably these sculptures are of a little later date. There are many sculptures of the Buddha sitting cross-legged, and standing in the usual attitude of exposition.

The whole of the front of this cave is fully covered with sculptured groups and with most elaborate ornamentation, still in very good preservation. The great arched window above the porch shows the wooden forms of the ribs. The stone imitation of wooden structure is very prominent in this cave, and the rafters and beams, were carefully hewn out in the ceilings. At right angles to the main façade is a place for pilgrims or attendants. The room is small in size and the capitals of the pillars are richly carved with mango branches and clusters of grapes and fruits in the middle.

Opposite to the rest-house is a great sculpture of a Snake-King, or Naga-King, who probably was a strong supporter of Buddhism, seated under a canopy of a seven-headed cobra, with his Queen by his side. In her left hand she holds a lotus flower. On the right a female attendant is carved with a fly-fan in her hand.

On each side of the great arch window stands a male figure in a halo with rich head-dress ; the one on the left holding a bag represents the God of Wealth ; a tiny child counting the money at so early an age seems to be already following in the father's footsteps.

Inside, in the cave, there are fifteen columns about fifteen feet high. At the square bases of these pillars are some small figures on the corners. These pillars support a bracket capital, each richly sculptured with the sitting Buddha in the centre, and elephants, or two

riders, or tigers, or flying figures supporting the brackets. Elaborate sculptures over the capitals give an effect of great richness to the interior of this cave. They appear to be symbols of Buddhist rituals and each composition is a legend.

The whole of the interior was once covered with a thin coating of white plaster, so as to hide the surface of the rock entirely ; but in spite of this the sculptors worked with great pains to produce elaborate carvings. There is not much variety in the sculptures of the triforium belt itself. These consist of alternate sitting or standing figures of the Buddha—the sitting ones all cross-legged—differing only in the position of the hands, each disposition of which has a special meaning. Between the seated figures stands another in the usual attitude of exposition ; the attitude in all of them is very nearly the same, yet no two figures are exactly alike.

A great dome rises eight feet high. Its ribs are made of stone, and between every fourth and fifth rib is carved a tiger's head. Opposite the main door stands a most gorgeously wrought stupa, which has a bas-relief of the Buddha in a standing position, and on the top of the stupa are three umbrellas in stone, one above the other.

The roof of the aisle is flat and has been painted with ornamental flower scrolls and figures of the Buddha and stupas ; on the walls have been paintings of the Buddha as well as attendants, in the upper two rows in sitting position and in the third mostly standing, showing halos behind the heads.

The arrangement for the lighting of the interior of this cave is astonishing. The daylight introduced through one great opening in the façade throws a

brilliant light on the altar, the principal object, and also upon the capitals of the pillars, exactly where it is most wanted. The spectator himself stands in the shade. The light on the floor is subdued, and on the roof and the aisles fades into comparative gloom.

The porch at the back of the court, under the great arched windows, still stands. The five pillars on each side of the cave separate the aisle from it, and five more run round the stupa.

This cave contains many paintings of the Buddha in the aisles and a few others with figures of monks still remain on the roof. The roof of the front aisle contains some exquisite panels, and those of the side aisles are painted in a rich floriated pattern. Temple 19 at Ajanta still remains one of the great architectural triumphs of the world.

The next cave, 20, is a small vihara, or monastery, with two gorgeously carved columns in front of the veranda. They have brackets attached to their capitals, and there is a charming statuette of a woman under a canopy of foliage. The sculptures of these are bold and free, much resembling those in cave 19. The sides of the steps to the veranda level are carved with beautiful decorative designs of river snakes. The ceiling of the veranda is hewn in imitation of wooden beams and rafters which remind one of those in caves 16 and 17. At each end of the veranda is a cell. The hall is twenty-eight feet wide, twenty-six feet long, and about thirteen feet high, and has no columns.

The roof is supported only by the walls and the front of the antechamber, which advances about seven feet into the cave and has two columns in front surmounted by seven carved figures of the Buddha and attendants. The image of the Buddha in the shrine was once



PAINED CEILING OF VERANDA

CAVE 17



THE CAPTURE OF THE ELEPHANTS

CAVE 17



THE BODHISATVA AS A SIX-TUSKED ELEPHANT

CAVE 17

By permission of the Royal India Society

PLATE XXII



BRAHMADATTA, THE KING OF BENARES, HONOURING THE GOLDEN GEESE

CAV 17

By permission of the Royal India Society

PLATE XXIII

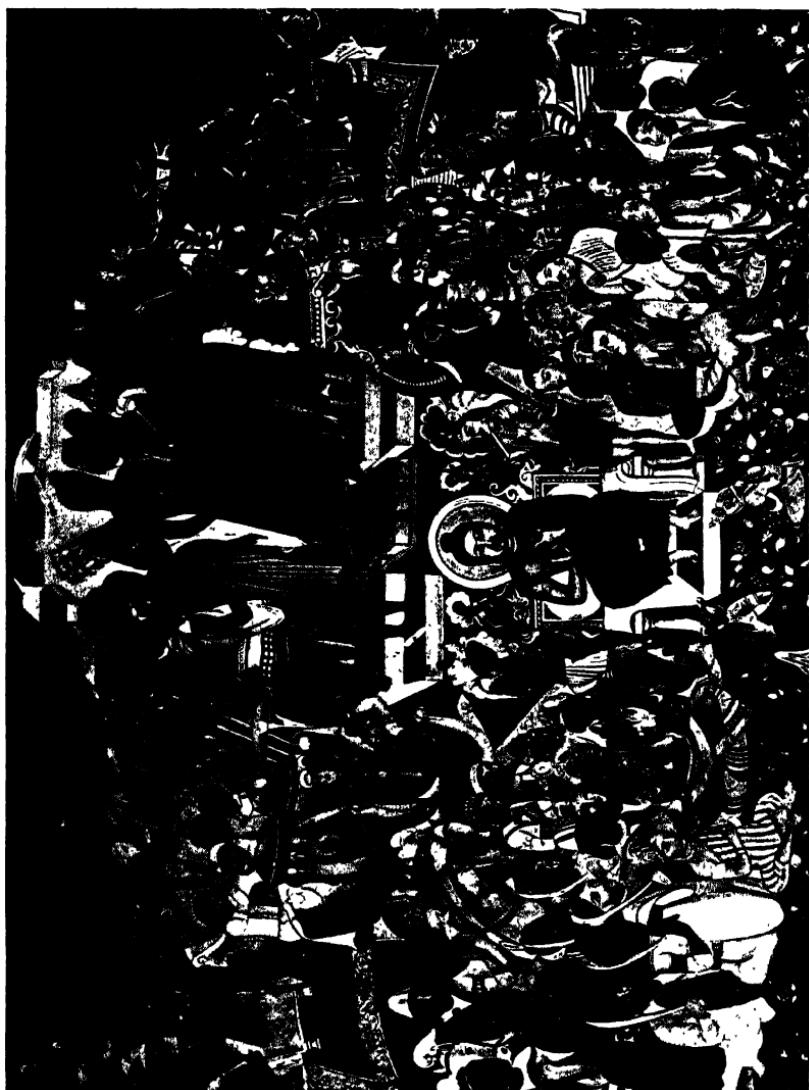


PLATE XXIV



A DEER-HUNTING SCENE, JATAKA STORY

CAVE 17

By permission of the Royal India Society

MONSIEUR VOLTAIS SCENE AND THE KING AND QUEEN LEAVING THE PALACE



PLATE XXVI

painted with deep Indian red. Perhaps this was done at a much later date by some less thoughtful artists.

It seems very much as though this cave was used as a chapter-house for this last group of caves. The interior is very dark, but is dry and keeps an equable temperature all the year round. There were many paintings in the cave at one time but now, except for a few fragments on the roof, all have disappeared. These fragments consist of flowers and interlaced designs.

From this cave we descend, and then descend again by a steep path for a considerable distance along the face of the scarp.

Chapter Ten

ADVENTURES—PLEASANT AND UNPLEASANT

FROM dawn until late into the night I worked. By day I copied the parts of the walls that were well lit, and by night I shifted on to those corners that always remained dark ; thus I economized both in petrol and eyesight. Life resolved itself into hard work, and escape from foes both known and unknown.

Every morning as I went down to the stream for my ablutions I saw the footprints of tigers, panthers and wolves, which had come down to drink at night, and it was interesting to see the little cubs' footprints side by side with the bigger ones.

In the autumn the colours in nature herself changed to glorious brown and reddish gold, and red blossoms, spread like flames on the hills ; gradually the trees shed their leaves and the whole forest soon became bare, and it seemed as though all nature was offering a silent prayer for the spring to return with its healing fingers.

As the sun went down old vultures came to their rocky nooks by the waterfalls, and owls hooted throughout the night. The opposite hills gave me a living picture of animal and bird life at all times of the day. Peacocks could be seen everywhere in the jungle by the stream; on the rocks and trees, and their harsh squeaking voice echoed from one side of the hills to the other. The first peacock I saw at Ajanta at nightfall was sitting on a black rock which pierced the white sky. By slow degrees it descended to the stream at the end of the hill to drink water.

One night I entered one of the less-explored caves ;

it was a very large unfinished one, which was hardly ever cleaned and smelt stale, while water leaked through the ceiling. The hall was very large, and thick columns, gorgeously carved and decorated, rose to the ceiling. The atmosphere was fearful and solemn and I felt that I was not alone. As I advanced into the middle, with my petrol lamp in my hand, there was a whirr of wings and hundreds of swallows began to fall on every side dazed at the sudden appearance of light, striking my head and body and tumbling off to the ground. Bats, too, were flying about. The ground all around me was so thick with these black rock swallows that I was afraid of treading upon them and could not work in that cave by night.

Another evening, about twilight, I heard a crash, and right in front of me fell a big heavy stone! Almost immediately another followed and, had I been just two or three feet farther forward, I should have been killed that evening by these fragments of falling rock. I was so startled at this, that I thought an earthquake had started.

A little later I went by the side of the cave to see what was above on the top of the hills. The sides of the caves ascend like straight walls and, coming out, I saw that there were many monkeys quarrelling and fighting among one another along the top of the hills. The danger might have resulted from accident, but these little beasts had seen me, and I thought it was not just chance that had sent down those stones so near to my head.

In the sky I saw the advance of heavy threatening clouds. There would be a mighty storm that night, and the wild monkeys, knowing this, came from the jungle to get shelter for the night in the caves. I slept

without protection of any kind, and my cave hall was open to whatever animal or bird took a fancy to come in. But although monkeys usually do not live in caves they were searching for safe corners between the plain rocks and the recesses of carved columns where they could cling out of reach of their natural enemies, the prowling hyenas and tigers. They turned up that night, but behaved very well, and after all no one likes to get wet, so there they stayed.

But the monkeys, although annoying, were not so dangerous as some other enemies, both large and small, especially the tiny poison bees. On one occasion as I was passing from cave 10 to another with my petrol lamp in my hand, my hand was suddenly surrounded by a swarm of bees. There are many combs of wild bees hanging from the ceilings of these caves. Once a year the village people come to collect honey. They gather a special kind of leaf from certain jungle trees and, making a fire of them, create a smoke which worries the bees. They are so sensitive to the smell of the smoke that at once they try to eat up their honey, and millions of them, producing a dark cloud, fly miles away to avoid the smell. Then the people collect what is left of the honey to sell in the market. I had unconsciously enacted the part of the honey-gatherers, and the bees, smelling the fumes of my petrol lamp, thought their enemies were near and began to come down. All I could do was to run, for, when attacked, they were most deadly, and it is said that sometimes they are so poisonous that the sting of one is enough to worry an elephant.

The chowkidars of the caves told me that once an official came to inspect the caves. He was passing along outside cave 10, quite carelessly puffing away at a cigar, when down came a swarm of bees and stung

him on his bald head. Then he grew absolutely frantic and ran towards the stream shouting for help ; but the faster he ran and the angrier he became, the more the bees kept stinging. In desperation he plunged into the water. Thereupon these chowkidars rushed out to his rescue, wrapped him in rugs, and, since his head was badly swollen, carried him to the village for treatment.

Only once I felt really scared and that was a night towards the end of my long stay in the caves. It was just before midnight. The outside of the cave was fairly bright with a clear sky and the stars above. I had been to bed early and was sleeping peacefully in my little cot when something made me wake up, and I found myself sitting up in strained attention. Something was going to happen ! Sure enough it did.

Very slowly a great dark shape passed in front of my cave ; I watched eagerly to see what it was. It slowly passed by. I thought I was dreaming, and rubbed my eyes and looked again. From the right-hand side of the cave another shape followed the first, only much bigger. It must have been four or five feet long and about four feet high. When it came in front of where I was sitting motionless, it seemed to be looking straight at me ! I saw two balls of fire shooting out of intense dark and then they suddenly turned away and passed into the jungle down below. These were a huge tiger and his mate !

My servant was lying asleep like a log in the left-hand corner of the cave. I was terribly frightened, but the fear of losing him altogether prevented me from giving him a true version of my experience. I just described the beast as a jackal or something like it. I thought if he knew the truth he would run away from me

altogether. The next morning I was able to trace a regular catwalk down to the torrent bed by which these animals had come and gone. It passed along the terrace outside my cave, but three or four yards from where I used to sleep. After that I used to collect logs of wood from the jungle every evening and make a fire outside before I went to bed.

Among the Hindus round about the village of Ajanta the story goes that once the gods and goddesses, tired of the monotony of heaven and wishing to refresh themselves with a little excitement, begged leave to go down to earth for one night to enjoy themselves. So earnestly did they entreat Indra, the King of Heaven, that out of compassion he granted their request, but on one condition, however, that they must return before the cock's first crow, otherwise they would be shut out from heaven for ever.

Then the gods and goddesses came swiftly down to earth, merrily dancing and singing, and no sooner did they see the splendid gorge at Ajanta than they chose it for the site of their one night's entertainment. Busily they hollowed halls and chambers out of the hillside, and so thoroughly enjoyed themselves that they forgot the time limit ; but, alas, they were startled by the cock's crow, and the heavenly King's curse fell upon them ; so they were transformed into beautiful sculptures and paintings. Never again could they return to heaven, but were forced to remain on earth for all time to come.

The poor illiterate people are so ignorant that they do not even know that these caves were Buddhist monasteries, but connect them with this legend. However, the villagers have always known of the existence of the caves, and from very ancient times, once a year

about the end of November, they have held a traditional fair down by the stream below the caves when priests, men, women and children visit these caves, and spend one day of the year in an entirely different way from all the rest.

One early morning, near cave 1, I heard a noise of people and a rumble of bullock carts. As it was impossible for the carts to go farther, the people gradually approached by foot towards the source of the stream. All day long people, all Hindus, were pouring into the gorge from everywhere around, sometimes from as far as thirty miles away, starting for the winter festival even two or three days before.

They began to assemble in the valley and to bathe in the stream, afterwards putting on gorgeously coloured clothes—red, green, purple and yellow—and then went into the rock-cut temples. Each of the priests took charge of three or four caves, in order to show to the pilgrims the images of the Buddha sitting cross-legged in the shrine, at whose feet or into whose lap they placed offerings of flowers, fruit, a little rice, small clay-burnt lamps, and some small coins. As soon as one batch of worshippers had passed out the priest would take the offerings of food and money into his own keeping.

Meanwhile, in the ravine below, as the sun went higher up in the sky, a little noisy open-air bazaar gradually sprang up, with small stalls for selling food, sweetmeats, flowers, fruits, clothes, earthenware lamps, toys and reed pipes for the children.

Throughout the whole day a continuous stream of people came and went to and from the caves, others bathed and worshipped, cooked and ate, reclined, slept or sang by the stream. The fair lasted until

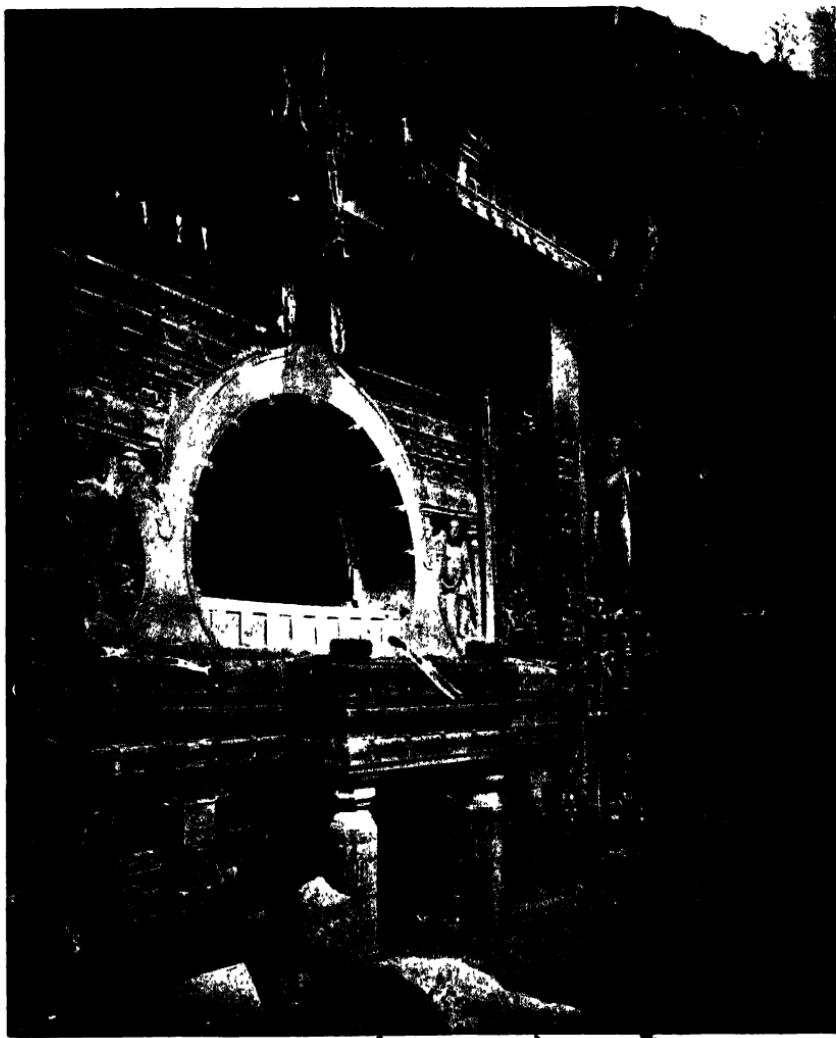
nightfall when the people gradually deserted the ancient shrines, leaving the valley once more lonely and still.

It happened one day that while I was closely examining the colossal image of the Buddha in cave 16 and was feeling the smoothness of its arms, I felt something hard sticking up in the joint of one of the arms. Feeling rather curious, I dug it out of the accumulated dirt with a penknife and found it to be a thick piece of heavy metal which, being brought to the light, appeared to be a copper coin, apparently very ancient.

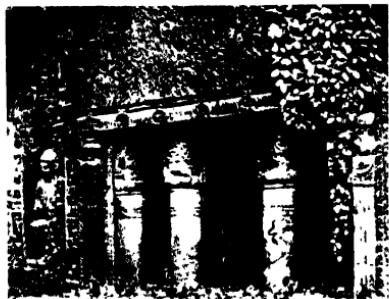
When it had been cleaned, however, it proved to be an early Mohammedan coin, about four hundred years old. Evidently some Hindu pilgrim had placed it as an offering in the hand of the Buddha. This goes to prove that even in those days the caves were known to the Hindus, who used to come and worship there.

Occasionally a number of Hindus would come to fish in the deep lake at the bottom of the falls or to gather wood and wild fruits in the jungle around the ravine, and then they would wander into the caves. It is astonishing to see that their faces and features, movements, and simplicity of expression are exactly like those in the old paintings, particularly resembling the frescoes in caves 9 and 10.

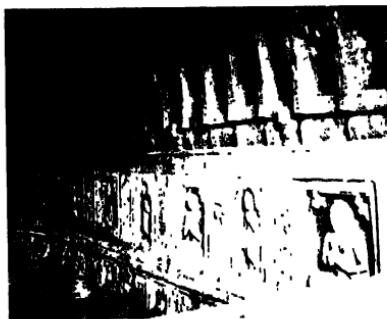
The hillside was always covered with plants bearing wild fruit and flowers ; but now, in the autumn, the fragrant *sephali* flowers bloomed all along the wayside, over the boulders and in amongst the pomegranates, grapes and rich, ripe berries. So fragile were they that at the first touch of the sun the white petals with their orange stems dropped on the ground. I was reminded of the far-gone days when the simple monks lived chiefly on the fruits and vegetables they grew, of which those I saw were the faint traces.



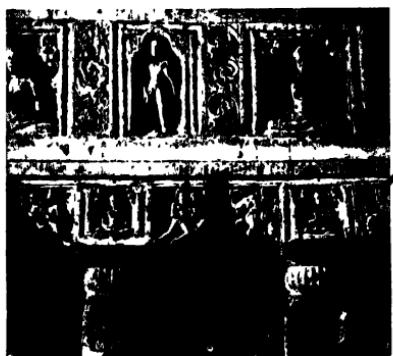
FACADE OF CHAILYA CAVE 19



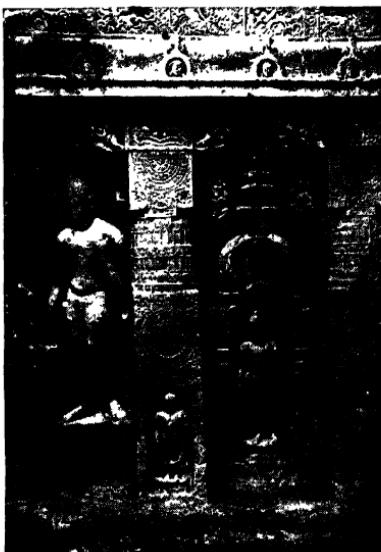
AN ALCOVE FOR REPOSE



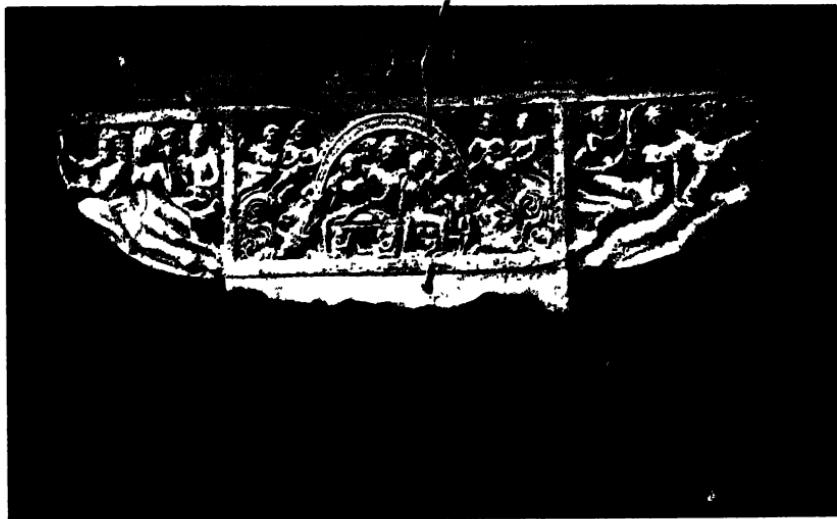
ROOF ABOVE TRIFORIUM



TRIFORIUM

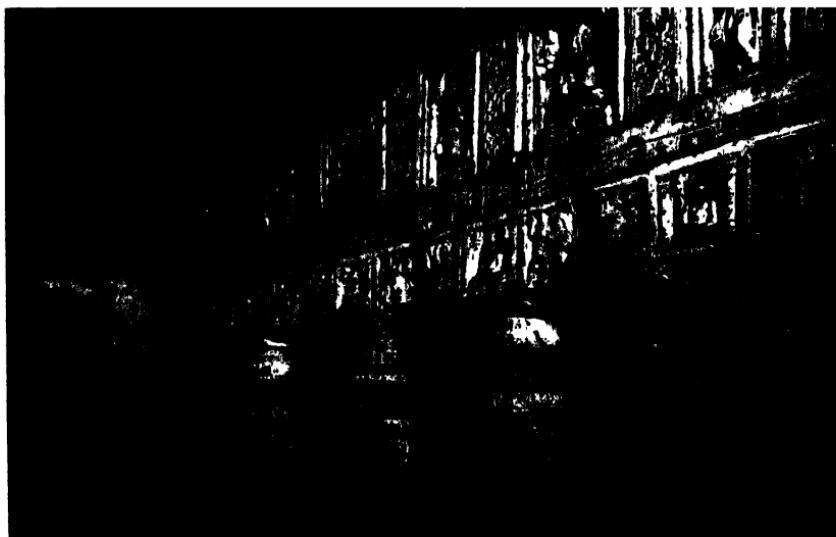


THREE BUDDHAS
LOWER PART OF FAÇADE



A CAPITAL IN THE VERANDA

CAVE 24



THE RIGHT SIDE OF THE NAVE

CAVE 19



A NAGA-KING, QUEEN AND ATTENDANT

CAVE 19

In the stream and all along its banks were scattered many little diamond-shaped stones—black, vermillion red, green, mauve and yellow. Also, all along the ravine between the hill and the stream, I collected many chunks of hard clay stone of the same colours and I still have samples with me. It was with colours obtained by grinding these pebbles and clay stones that the artists of Ajanta used to paint their frescoes. In Sanskrit literature is this reference to rock colour: 'His companion picks up from the ground pieces of clay or stone of different colours, blue, yellow, red, brown and grey.' But this crude material was used not only in those far-off times, but even today the Indian village artists use it for colouring huge images of gods and goddesses and the walls of their huts. In Bengal, Orissa, Jaipur, and in South India, such artists have shown me their lamp-black used with glue and rice water and also their numerous rock colours. The rich Indian red (known as *geri-mati*) can be bought by chunks for a few annas in the bazaar. The glue is obtained by boiling tamarind seed.

From various passages in old Sanskrit writings it is known that wall-paintings were exceedingly common in India from very ancient times, and all the rich people used to have their walls decorated with frescoes, especially in South India.

There is plenty of evidence which distinctly shows that the art of painting and sculpture was widely practised in India's prehistoric age—some six or seven thousand years ago. It is now confirmed by the discovery in Western and Central India of the prehistoric Indian civilization in the cities like Harappa, Amri, Nal, Mohenjo-Daro, Anupa and Mahishmati by the great rivers Indus and Saraswati in the West and the rivers

Narmada and Tapti in Central India. The Indo-Aryan civilization may be dated 6000 B.C. to 5000 B.C. Even pre-Aryan dwellers of India possessed a unique civilization, inhabiting great and wealthy cities, and were well skilled in arts and crafts. Their artistic achievements deserve great praise.

There is a scene in *Sakuntala*, the most famous of classical Sanskrit plays written by the great Hindu poet and dramatist Kalidasa who lived in the second century B.C., where paintings are mentioned. Maharaja Dushmanta himself, the hero of the play, painted in his own *chitra-shala* or art studio a life-size portrait of Sakuntala from memory and always kept it before him. But various references in the play show that the art of painting had been practised long before *Sakuntala* was written.

And even up till today this traditional art has survived all over India, though curiously enough not among those who are called educated and cultured, but among the illiterate masses ; so that paintings of slow-moving elephants, hunting tigers, soldiers on horseback, mythological gods and goddesses, the parrot on a tree, bulls and goats fighting, are found on the front, back and side walls of humble village homes, and on scrolls of paintings done by village artists, called *patuas*. The *alpana* designs, which every Indian woman knows how to draw with only the tips of her fingers on the wall or floor of her home, are the direct descendants of the various ornamental designs to be found scattered all over the Ajanta caves.

Chapter Eleven

THE FINEST PERIOD OF INDIAN ART

THROUGH the ages from the third century to the sixth century A.D., another group of caves was cut out on the eastern side of the hill, and to the right of the caves of the first period. These six caves are now numbered 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, and 1. All day it is impossible to see clearly within these caves, so dark are they ; but in the evening, just before the sun sinks in the west, they light up, and the frescoes glow on the walls. They fall into the third group of excavations in the series at Ajanta caves.

Cave 6. This vihara cave 6 is the only one at Ajanta which has two stories, but it has, unfortunately, been excavated at a spot where the foundation is not so sound as in other places. As a result of this, the veranda of the upper story has fallen down, and the interior has a ruined aspect not common in cave architecture.

The halls of both stories are of about the same dimensions, fifty-three feet square. There are four large windows through which light and air come into the halls, and the stone wall under them is panelled to give the effect of wood. The upper story has twelve pillars. In the lower, four more are introduced in the centre.

In the façade, on each side of the doorway in the upper corners, there must once have been two carved figures, but these have now fallen away. Local mendicants lived in this cave and made fires, which did much damage to the interior and the paintings on the walls and ceilings.

Out of the sixteen pillars in the lower hall, only

a few now remain standing. The others collapsed because of the mud which collected there and covered the lower parts and caused them to weaken and crumble away. Not only have these pillars given way, but also masses of stone from the ceiling have fallen down.

The stair in the front aisle leading to the upper story has been broken below, but is still connected with the veranda above. This veranda was originally supported by two fine columns and four pilasters. Above the landing are many small statues of the Buddha carved on the wall, and two stupas.

Outside the veranda in the upper story are small chapels with the Buddha in sculptures. There are also at each end of the veranda some chambers with carved pillars ; no doubt these were specially built for the living apartments of the high priests. Inside these chambers there are rooms large enough for holding meetings. Opposite the central space at each side and at the end of the left aisle are chambers with pillars in front, each leading to an inner cell. There are also three cells on each side and one at the end of the right aisle. The antechamber is quite large and has a colossal figure of the Buddha on each side of the shrine door. The shrine contains the usual statue of the Buddha with two antelopes in front of the throne.

This cave also was painted, but the paintings have almost entirely disappeared. It has also a larger number of sculptures of the Buddha than any other vihara at Ajanta. The few fragments of painting on the back wall of the lower story and in the antechamber are so smoked that nothing can be made out of them, except a large palace scene and Indra-like figures on both sides of the shrine.

The upper story was painted, but here also the

pictures have almost entirely disappeared. The front of the chapel at the right end of the front aisle still retains fragments of paintings and, inside, the walls were once covered with painted figures of the Buddha. In the left chapel in front on each side of the cell door is a painted Dravidian building, a vihara; on the inside of the vihara is a seated figure of the Buddha, and on the inside of its veranda roof is a circular ornament with strings of pearls hanging from it.

The lower story of cave 6 has its pillars arranged in a different way from that in the later Ajanta caves. Here they are arranged in four rows of four each, sixteen in all round a square, and without capitals or sculpture, whereas in others there are twelve.

Great pains were taken with the statues of the Buddha; one in the small chamber to the right of the first floor of cave 6 is covered with a layer of the finest plaster, one-eighth of an inch thick, so painted and polished that the face has the smoothness and sheen of porcelain.

Cave 4. Now we pass on to cave 4, the largest vihara of all the twenty-nine caves at Ajanta.* The next largest is cave 24 which is situated higher up in the cliff than cave 3, and is probably a little higher than the next three at this end of the hill. Simple grandeur gives it a magnificent appearance.

The façade is covered with eight plain octagonal figure-pillars. The huge veranda, ninety feet long by sixteen feet wide, is supported by severe octagonal pillars with bracket capitals. At each end is a small room, ten feet by eight feet, reached by three steps, which were probably chambers for guests or for the keeper of the cave.

In the wall at the back of the veranda the central door is sculptured instead of painted, which is rather

unusual at Ajanta. The reason seems to be that at a later time the artists were not content with the plastic effect they were able to produce in their paintings with shading, so they had recourse to sculpture to bring out their round forms and effects. Unfortunately, this door has been damaged up to a height of two feet, the floor of the cave having for long been covered with earth and other decomposing materials. However, the decorations on the wall on each side are still unharmed. Here are depicted fascinating scenes from Jataka tales of men and women making merry, representations of lions, bulls, monkeys, goats and elephants, and also, on the right side, a large relief of a standing figure of the Buddha as a young prince, strong and beautiful. The square windows are charmingly carved with delicate, whirling foliage, among which are a few female figures and chubby babies.

The hall is eighty-seven feet square, supported by twenty-eight columns of the same plain style as those in the veranda. At each end of the aisle is a cell. The ceiling looks rough as though a layer of rock had fallen off; but here, and nowhere else in the cave, are traces of painting in brilliant colours. The antechamber, twenty-one feet by thirteen feet, has two standing figures of the Buddha at each end of its wall and on either side of the shrine door are two similar figures.

Cave 3. This cave, a small vihāra placed high up on the western top of the crescent hill, dating about the seventh century, was never completed; in fact only the veranda was blocked out. The veranda is about twenty-nine feet by seven feet, supported by four pillars and two pilasters. A rough entrance has been made into the hall, but there has been scarcely any excavation.

Cave 5. This is another vihara cave, at the same level as number 6 ; it possesses no peculiarity and was never quite finished. We may assume it to be of about the same date as cave 6.

The veranda is over forty-five feet long by about nine feet wide, with four front pillars ; but only one—that on the right side of the entrance—is finished, quite plainly in the same style as those of neighbouring cave 4, only much shorter and with a square base at the bottom.

The door of this cave is rather interesting, with its many carved figures of the Buddha standing and attendants and pairs of seated figures. Windows have been cut out but never finished. No doubt the rock here was found unsuitable for further excavation, and therefore the whole cave was left unfinished.

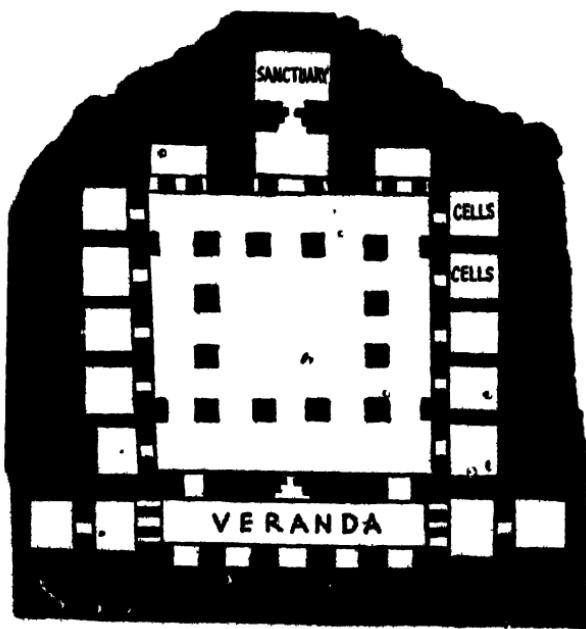
Cave 2. The second cave, one of the latest of the series, is similar to but smaller than its neighbour, cave 1. It is one of the caves most notable for its richness in fresco paintings, which are marvellously preserved, in spite of their exposed position.

The veranda, slightly over forty-six feet in length, is supported in front by four pillars and two pilasters of massive proportions, all with similarly elegant designs ; so fine and delicate indeed are the ornamentations that they would seem more suited to metal work than to stone. At either end of the veranda in front of the two principal cells stands a small porch, the difference in height being made up by bas-reliefs representing scenes from the life of the Buddha. A chapel is reached from each porch.

Between the hall and the veranda is a finely decorated door, at the bottom of which are several guards, apparently holding flowers ; covering them are snake-canopies. Above this are numerous pairs of standing figures,

male and female, carved in various attitudes. The cave has two windows placed opposite to the side aisle formed by the richly-carved columns in the hall.

One is a little taken aback on entering the hall to find it so dark. Its dimensions are only about forty-eight feet square and eleven feet high. The twelve pillars

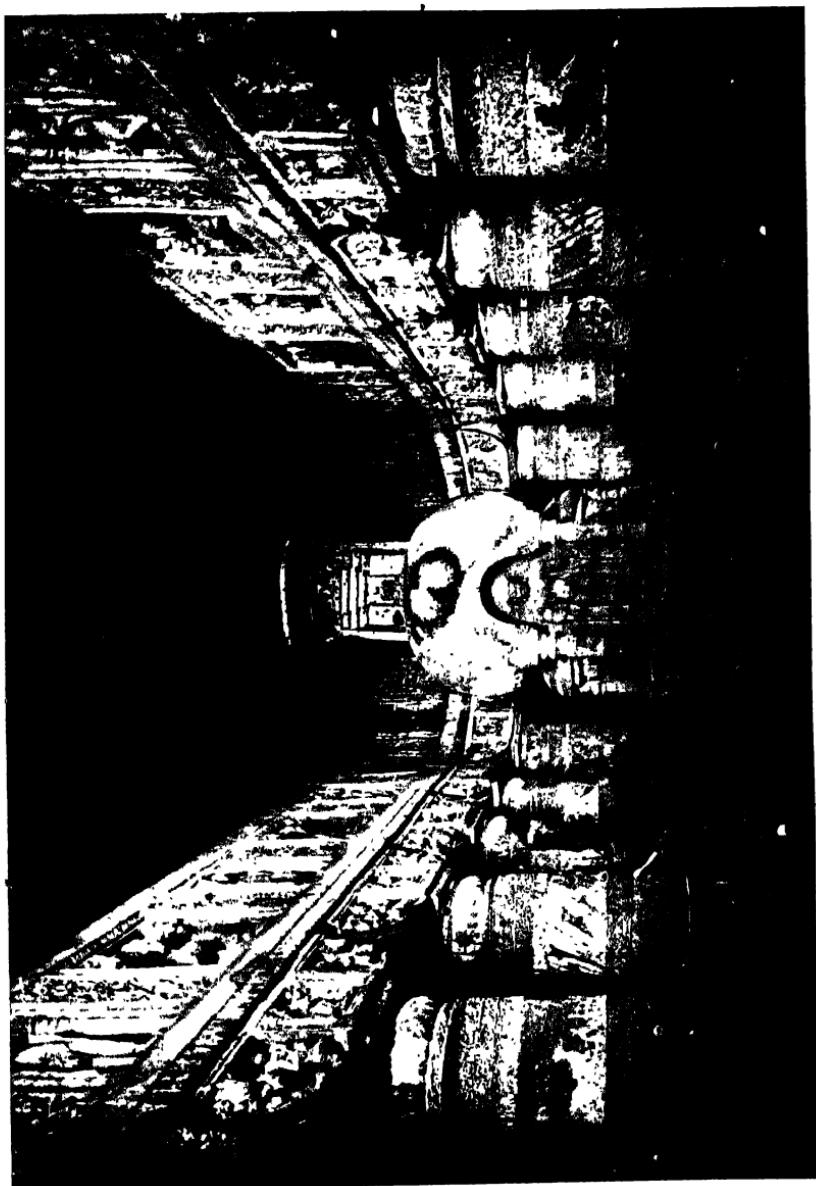


PLAN OF CAVE 2

supporting the roof are rich in carving and some have fat four-armed dwarfs at the corners of the capitals.

In the sanctuary is a statue—of course, of the Buddha. On either side of it, at the end of the aisles, is a chapel cell filled with marvellous sculpture. In the one on the north sit two most portly figures; the female has a child on her knees and is amusing it with a toy. In the south chapel two male figures occupy a like position.

The value of this cave is due to the paintings in it,





FAÇADE OF THE LOWER STORY
CAVE 6



INTERIOR OF VIHARA CAVE 6



THE BIRTH OF THE BUDDHA
CAVE 2



A KING PUNISHING ONE OF HIS COURT DANCERS
CAVE 2

From copies formerly in the possession of Kallianjee Curumsey, Esquire, Bombay



A LOTUS LAKE WITH HUNTERS AND
WILD GEESE, JATAKA STORY

CAVE 2



A PRINCESS PREPARING TO VISIT THE BUDDHA

CAVE 2



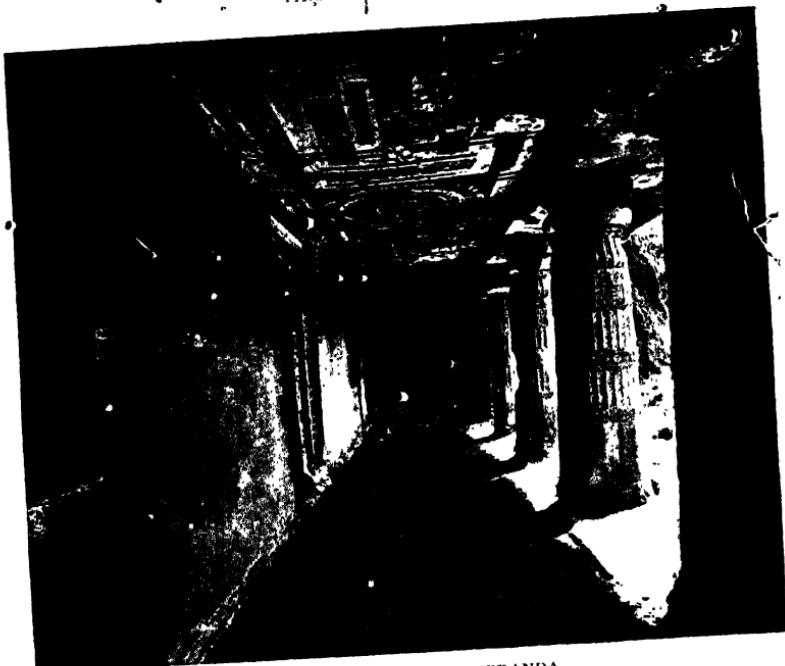
A PRINCESS IN THE CROWD

CAVE 2 •

(Probably third century A.D.)



FACADE OF CAVE 1



PAINTED CEILING OF VERANDA

CAVE 2

PLATE XXXVI

especially those on the ceilings. For the most part they are only decorative scrolls and patterns ; but so appropriately placed as to give an extremely finished look to the cave ; in fact, the effect and arrangements of a complete vihara can be better understood from this cave than from any other at Ajanta. A very great deal of the wall-painting still remains. In the veranda the pattern on the wall can be easily followed.

Inside, the ceilings of the great hall and aisles, the antechamber, shrine, and chapels are all admirably designed, and though, especially in the hall, blackened with smoke, they contain many striking examples of floral decorations—Naga (snake) and flying figures, and others with human and animal heads, the lower extremities ending in scroll work. It is the only cave that retains any fragments of paintings in the shrine, those on the ceiling being especially fine.

The painting in the two chapels is of a yellower tone than most of the other wall-paintings, and is filled with standing figures, many of them women, some with aureoles round their heads, and is possibly of later date than the rest, probably the fifth to the seventh century. On the right wall of the hall is one of the most interesting groups of pictures now left, one of the scenes between the second and third cell doors representing the retinue of a Raja. He sallies forth on a large elephant with the umbrella of state over his head, and the *ankusa*, or goad, in his hand ; behind him is an attendant with the *chhatra* (umbrella) ; at his side goes a smaller elephant with a rider, now defaced, and before him walks a man with a laden bag on his back. In front and to the left are seen five horses, two of them green, the men on the green horses looking back at the Raja. There are also fourteen men on foot, of whom eleven seem to be

soldiers, carrying oblong shields, and three carrying round ones stamped with huge grinning Gorgon faces. Two above, on the extreme left, have swords in scabbards, nine others have long Nepal swords known as *kukri*, two other men play flutes, and another beats a drum.

• Between the first and second cell doors is represented, with a conventionalism worthy of the Chinese, a river with fish and shells in it. A boat with three masts, a sail, and an oar aft, and filled towards the stern with ten *matkas*, or earthenware jars, carries a man with long hair, praying. In the heaven behind, Chandra, the moon, a figure with a crescent behind him is represented as descending, followed by another figure. A Naga-Raja or Snake-King and his wife in the water seem to draw the boat back ; and below is represented in the water another figure, with a human head and a long tail. On the left, in the direction of the boat's course, is the Buddha on the shore and a figure worshipping him. Rocks are conventionally painted. The upper part of this wall is covered with interesting scenes.

• The long panels of the ceiling in cave 2, dating from about A.D. 500, offer well-preserved examples of charming floral decorations in blue. The circular panels are very fine, the figures in the spandrels being particularly good and full of movement. The individual figures are remarkable for clever drawing, the artist having apparently gone out of his way to invent specially difficult poses ; a woman prostrating herself, and snake-hooded nagas, or water-sprites, are good examples. The woman standing with her left leg bent up is a capital piece of draughtsmanship, the feet being as well drawn as the hands ; and the woman in the swing is pleasing and life-like.

The Finest Period of Indian Art



A FIGURE FROM A PAINTING IN CAVE 2

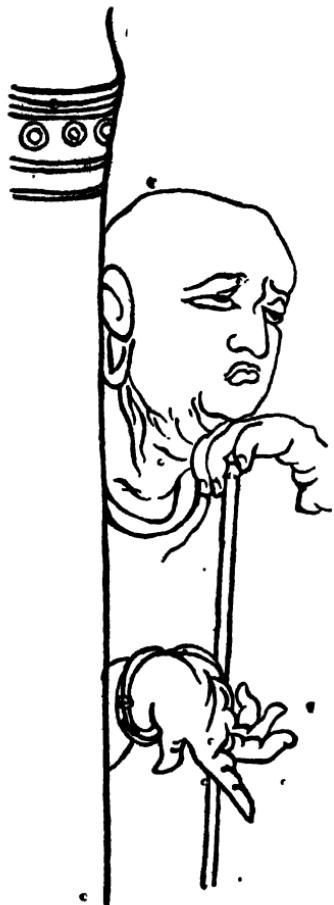
In the left-hand cell are fragments of a long inscription painted in small letters on a dark green ground, and scattered over the paintings in the cave are seven

or eight inscriptions. The character of the letters is of the sixth or seventh century, that is to say probably later than the excavation of the cave. Generally the inscriptions refer to the names of Kings, the Goddess of Learning, and disciples of the Buddha.

In cave 2, on the right-hand side of the wall, there is a famous picture of a King threatening one of his beautiful court dancers. One day the Buddha was passing along the King's mango groves beyond the palace when the King, probably Ajatasatru, who was hostile to the Buddha's preachings, sent the most beautiful dancing girl of his court to tempt him from the path of righteousness. But, no sooner had she seen him, than she fell

THE MESSENGER IN CAVE 2

worshipping at his feet. So angry was the King when he heard that she had failed, that he threatened her with death. In the fresco the proud King is seen grasping his sword while before him in supplication kneels the dancing girl, and around them, weeping, are other ladies of the



court.' Very strangely, damp has soaked into the painting in such a way that it is the King's head that has been cut off. (See Plate XXXIII.)

Next, on the right of this fresco, is depicted the story of a *duta*, or messenger, telling the King of some great loss. The messenger is an old man, calm and self-possessed, but expressing, through his troubled eyes, the hopelessness of the situation and, through the outspread palm, the abandonment of all hope. The line drawing and painting of this figure is simply marvellous.

On the right-hand wall of a dark cell, by the side of the antechamber in cave 2 where no light can ever reach it, is a square painting of a lady, accompanied by women attendants, preparing to visit the Buddha. Unfortunately I found it impossible to make a complete copy, as my paper was not large enough in width and therefore I had to content myself with the middle portion only, leaving out some of the attendants and children. The scene of this painting was laid in the veranda of a house and shows the wood and stone architecture of those days, as do also the steps leading up from the ground in front. This ground is of deep Indian red, a very common colour for earth or floor in Ajanta frescoes, and it is sprinkled with blossoms from a flowering creeper which twines into the window. Children are playing with a hobby-horse and tops. The lady must have been a good and devoted follower of the Buddha, for above, in the right-hand corner, hovers a boy *deva* or flying angel. Her fine muslin sari has been painted so thin and fine that she appears almost nude. (See Plate XXXIV.).

Cave 1. At the extreme right end of the crescent moon-like hill there is cave 1, which was probably the last to be excavated in the series of twenty-nine caves.

This vihara or conventional abode possesses the most

highly ornamented and exquisite exterior, and is filled with the most marvellous paintings one can ever imagine. They are examples of the highest standard of Buddhist art in India—a standard so high that it has scarcely, if ever, been surpassed.

The façade of this cave is beautifully designed, variety combined with sufficient uniformity for architectural purposes produces a great richness of effect. It is the only example here of a vihara decorated with sculpture.

In front of the veranda there was a porch supported by two advanced columns, of which only fragments of the bases and elegant capitals, like those in cave 2, now remain. At each end, outside the veranda, there is a room of which the open front is supported by two pillars, the floor being raised a few steps, and the elaborate entablature of the façade is carried round the whole front at the same level. The room on the east opens into another, nearly thirteen and a half feet square, and almost completely dark ; that on the left opens into two others somewhat smaller.

The six pillars which support the veranda are of three or four different orders. The outer pillars are merely square piers ; but they increase in richness from the flanks to the centre, where the circular shafts are elaborately ornamented and the capitals grandly bold, thus drawing the attention of the spectator towards the cave's main entrance.

The beautiful doorway was originally covered with thin white plaster, a great many traces of which still remain, and the carved figures and decorations round the door were also once coloured. It was sculptured in simple and subdued fashion, in order that the flat paintings on the walls might appear more harmonious and striking.

Cave 1 contains some of the greatest masterpieces of the world. On the left of the central shrine is the picture of Prince Gautama and his wife, Yashodhara. Most likely it represents their marriage. The Prince holds in his hand a blue lily. The bridal crowns are such as are still used in India today by the Hindus. (See Plate XXXVII.)

In the upper part of the fresco the Buddha is again painted in a love scene with Yashodhara, on a much smaller scale, although he appears to look down upon the futility of the world which is represented around him. Nearby are two cranes; one is straining for flight, while the other settles contentedly upon the nest. Perhaps they symbolize the diverse feelings of Prince Gautama and Yashodhara. The painting is many times over life size.

The Prince is painted in a light flesh colour, quite golden, while Yashodhara is less noticeable and of a dull greyish-brown colour, but she looks very handsome indeed. In bringing out the forms the shadows have been stippled with cobalt-blue. So wonderfully is the scene painted that, in spite of the varnish, the colour is still clear and vivid. The artist probably spent a lifetime thinking of the subject before executing it so boldly and with such an unerring hand. This fresco is an example of the highest school of Buddhist art in India after a process of development which passed through eleven hundred years. The colour and modelling of the flesh look so real, vivid and life-like, that one feels a desire to touch the body. Flowers on heads, and pearls and precious stone jewels round the neck, were painted in a most realistic manner. A few lines of delicate hair hang loosely down, touching the smooth, soft cheek and the forehead of the girl. One is tempted

to set back the truant hair to its proper place. The nairbent, downcast eyes of the women show them to be modest and chaste in spirit. The realistic treatment of the draperies, and ornaments makes the figures most graceful. All these things were painted by the artists with great devotion and a burning love for the beauty and joy they had seen in life and nature. I often



A PRINCESS AND YASHODHARA, FROM A WALL-PAINTING IN CAVE I

wonder how it was possible that these delicate feelings—a sense of devotion, humility with dignity, and sweet gracefulness—have so completely disappeared from the artists of our time.

The mode of hairdressing in ancient India was most interesting. It is fascinating to see so many different ways and different shapes in which both women and men used to dress their hair. The Indian women of all classes are still noted for their beautiful, soft and



PRINCE GAUTAMA AND HIS WIFE, YASHODHARA, WITH ATTENDANTS
CAV. I



THE TEMPTATION OF THE BUDDHA BY MARA

CAVE I

From a copy formerly in the possession of Kallianjee Curumsey, Esquire, Bombay

PLATE XXXVIII



PRINCE GAUTAMA BATHING IN HIS PALACE



WOMEN WORSHIPPING THE BUDDHA

CAVE 1

Both by permission of the Royal India Society



GANDHARVAS

CAVE 1

Copy in the Museum of Rabindra-Bharati, Calcutta

glossy hair. Fresh and fragrant flowers, such as *mallika*, *kanakanvaram*, *champaka*, *padma*, *kunda*, *yuthika*, *malati*, *madhavi*, *sirisa*, *asoka*, *karlikara*, *mandara*, *sephali*, *palasa*, *kuruwaka*, *ketaki*, *karavira*, *vakula*, or half-blossomed buds are worn round their heads or hidden round the knots of their hair. Making ornaments of flowers was considered a great art. Sweet-scented flowers are also used for decorating and perfuming the bed.

In these paintings the lips of the women were painted with crimson lac-dye ; their shapely feet were also dyed with the same, as is still done in the India of today. They used *tilaka* (a decoration on the forehead made with clay and sandal-wood paste) and painted their eyes with *kajal* (collyrium). The bath was an important part of the toilet, and it became a great luxury in ancient India. Their bodies were cleaned with a soap-like substance and scented pastes. Sandal-paste and musk were also used on the body to keep it cool, soft and fragrant. Very many different kinds of rich perfumes were also freely used. Their hair was perfumed with the fragrant smoke with which they dried their hair after a bath. Scenes of royal ladies performing their toilet attended by their maids, the princesses looking into the mirror while their attendants are dressing their hair, are often painted on the walls of the caves at Ajanta. In one scene stand two girls, one holding a tray with flowers before a Princess who is probably Yashodhara. This painting is about life-size, and is the most beautiful, life-like painting of a female figure that I have ever seen.

In many parts of India even today they wear *saris* and *cholis* in the same fashion as those that were painted in so many paintings at the caves of Ajanta. These can be seen in profusion in the Maharashtra districts,

South India and in Malabar, exactly as it was done in ancient India.

We never find in any early Indian painting or sculpture the name of the artist or sculptor who executed the works of art, or the dates. It would have been very useful if they had inscribed their names and dates on their works.

It is interesting to note that all kinds of birds, animals and flowers can be seen in the paintings of Ajanta, but animals like the camel and the cat and flowers like the rose are not seen painted anywhere.

Besides elaborate paintings such as these, some of the walls are covered with sketches in Indian red on a white ground. Nothing could be more instructive, for one is enabled thereby to study the process of the painting of the fresco from the first sketches to the finished masterpieces.

Ever since I first visited the art shrines of Ajanta and Ellora I always felt that the Government should start a small but well-equipped school of art very near the Ajanta caves for the more advanced students of painting. A similar school should be started for sculpture at the foot of the Ellora caves. The methodical study of the technique of ancient Indian fresco or mural-painting and figure compositions has great future possibilities in house decoration all over India. Drawing and painting after the old Indian methods and the study of traditional Indian art and historical subjects as well as the study of the up-to-date technical methods, and the study of nature and modern Indian life should not be neglected on any account. The period required for these courses of study should not take more than two or three years. It is high time the schools were started.

At Ajanta the artist depicted a narrative tale not only by a series of continuous paintings, but also by means of a single masterpiece. On the left of the antechamber in cave 1, in a very dark place, is an example of this—‘The Temptation of the Buddha by Mara’, a painting over twelve feet by ten feet. The picture has been badly varnished and damaged, and might fall down at any moment on account of its own weight. But one can still see that it is beautiful enough to rank with any masterpiece that the world has produced. (See Plate XXXVIII.).

Under the Maha Bodhidruma in the middle of the composition is seated the Buddha, golden-robed, serene and self-possessed, his face unchanged by the temptations and horrors surrounding him, and his hand just touching the earth, to bear witness to this truth. In front is the beautiful Mara and, on either side of him, his most alluring daughters seeking to tempt the Buddha away from his meditations and high purpose. All around, the horrible and fearful creatures of Mara are making desperate efforts to terrify him. Warriors slash at him with their long straight swords, threatening him with destruction, a sea-lion gnashes its jaws, one loathsome devil with protruding eyes and great black eyebrows stretches his mouth and fingers to a hideous length, and from the mouth of another issues a snake, hissing. But the Buddha sits tranquil, his soul in perfect peace. As the lily that reposes on the placid waters, steadfast in glory as the bright flame, firm as the Mount Everest in the Himalayas—so Bodhisattva sits unmoved until the time comes for him to become Buddha.

Chapter Twelve

MY LAST DAYS AT AJANTA

ON the western side of the crescent-shaped hill, the last series of caves—21, 22, 23, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, and 29—were excavated between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D. As these face the east, they are bright with sunlight in the morning, but gradually become darker as the day wears on. Thus the sun shines into some of them in the morning and into others—caves 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.—in the afternoon.

On the other side of the earliest group, or at the western tip of the moon's crescent, are the monastic halls 1 to 6, most of which belong to the seventh century ; and right opposite to them, at the other extremity, is the fourth group, standing apart from the other three and facing the setting sun. This group includes the viharas or colleges numbered 20 to 25, and the magnificent chaitya house 26, which are the last and most elaborate of the four groups ; some of them, however, were left unfinished.

Cave 21. This large vihāra cave 21 was cut considerably farther along on the western side of the hill, just after the excavation of number 2 on the east. It is richly carved, but has been largely destroyed by the streams which come down from the hill above in the rainy season ; the falling rocks have damaged the front, and the veranda has been gradually obliterated by deposits of mud and mossy vegetation brought by the water. At each end of the veranda is a small room raised three steps above the level of the floor with two carved pillars in front, over which is a sculptured frieze.

Between caves 20 and 21 the hill recedes a little, and here a big waterfall descends in the rainy season. The caves of this group, 21, 22, 23, and 24 in the western hill, all greatly resemble the chapels in caves 1 and 2 of the eastern hill, and are arranged and finished in a similar style of rich ornamentation.

The hall measures fifty-one feet square and has chambers with pillared fronts in the middle and the ends of the side aisles, leading into a cell ; besides these there are four other cells on each side of the cave. The pillars in front of the cells at the back are surmounted by some very good carvings. The roof of the hall is supported by twelve columns, ornamented in a style similar to those in cave 2.

The entrance to the antechamber is unfinished and the shrine possesses a huge figure of the Buddha sitting cross-legged. There had been a great deal of painting here, but most of it has now gone. The doorway that leads into this cave 21 is elegant, and clearly dates from the fifth or sixth century A.D.

Some pieces of the roof painting inside the hall are still distinct. The blues look as fresh as if they had just been put on, although they were done more than a thousand years ago. The ground for the wall-painting was prepared by mixing together clay, cow-dung, some small pieces of fibre like jute, husks and little chips of stone : this was then laid smoothly on the rough surface of the rock, about an inch thick or a little more according as the cut in the rock surface required. Over this was laid a white coating, apparently made of shell lime. The lime was soaked in water for twenty-two days, until it just lost its strong stiffness and became like finely prepared clay, easily applied and sticking readily to the

surface. It was laid on in about the thickness of an egg-shell.

On the left wall are a few figures of the Buddha and of some fair-skinned females. Not all the walls of this cave were painted, and it is very interesting to note how portions of the wall had been made smooth as a ground for filling in the paintings.

Cave 22. This is another small vihara just seventeen feet square with four unfinished cells. The whole cave has the appearance of having been abandoned before completion. There is no window ; but there is a very pretty doorway and a narrow veranda, of which both pillars are broken.

In the sanctuary there is an image of the Buddha with his feet resting on the lotus, the Buddhist emblem of creative power. On the right side is a painting showing seven figures of the Buddha, each under its own Bodhi tree, each figure having its special name painted underneath it—such as Bipasbi, Sikhi, Bissabhu . . . , Kanaka Muni, Kasyapa, Sahya Muni, Maitreya ; the missing name might be Kakusanda.

Similar inscriptions engraved in stone, as in cave 16, are found at the left end of the veranda of this cave 22. They are of eleven lines with only a few words in each line, written in early Sanskrit, and reading something like this :—

‘ The meritorious gift of this ‘mandapa by Jayata . . . of . . . family, a great Upasaka, great-grandson of . . . grandson of . . . of Acharya Indra . . . son of Dharmahaga . . . may the merit of this be for excellent knowledge to all sentient beings, beginning with father and mother, etc.’

Cave 23. This cave, a little below the level of cave 22, is another vihara, and about fifty-one feet square and

over twelve feet high, with twelve pillars. The four massive columns in the veranda, of a design most suitable to stone architecture, are still in fairly good condition. They are very similar to the pillars of cave 1 in the eastern hill, and especially so in the capital where four dwarfs at the corner uphold square brackets. On each side of the door is a male figure, with a cobra-snake for a hood, guarding the place. Two windows, carved simply, light the interior. At either end of the veranda is a chapel.

This cave is more or less unfinished, without an image, even in the sanctuary. In some places the pillars are merely cut, in others the carving is incomplete. On the whole, it appears that it is the carving process that has taken the greatest amount of time and labour. There exists no trace of painting in any part of the building.

Cave 24. If completed, this cave would have been the largest and one of the most beautiful viharas in the whole series of caves at Ajanta. It is very unlike the others. We do not know the reason, but somehow the work was stopped before completion.

In the veranda there are six pillars, some of which are badly damaged; but recently they have been repaired. When I first saw them, the bracket capitals were still hanging from the top, although the pillars had been broken away. On the subsequent visit I was very glad to notice that the broken pillars had been repaired at considerable cost by H.E.H. the Nizam's Government. The carved groups of flying figures, as well as scroll and leaf ornaments, are of most beautiful workmanship. The work on the doors and windows also is very elaborate. These ornaments remind one of those in cave 19, and apparently both these caves are of the same age.

Inside the hall only one column had been finished ; but no other part of the interior was completely executed. By studying the very unfinished state of the interior, we get details of the process of execution which are not available in finished work, and thus we are able to learn how these caves were excavated from definite plans made beforehand. Long alleys were cut out in the rock with pickaxes and then the intervening walls were broken down, except where required as supporting columns. There is no trace of painting left anywhere.

Cave 25. To the right of the great chaitya temple, number 26 of the last group of caves at Ajanta and a little higher up, is a small vihara temple now numbered 25. The veranda opens into an enclosed court in front, from which a door leads into the next cave, number 26. The veranda has a chamber with three cells at the left end. One can enter the hall by three doors. It is twenty-six feet square, and has neither cell nor sanctuary. No paintings are found here.

Cave 26. The fourth mighty chaitya temple, which is the last finished shrine, was excavated, it seems, for the purpose of worship by Buddhist monks who lived in the viharas at the eastern end of the hill. Here the western hill terminates, and its noble face, lit up by the sun, makes the place particularly suitable for morning prayers, which must have been its original purpose and use. Probably the great Chinese pilgrim, Yuan Chwang, visited it in the year A.D. 638.

The lower part of the façade is broken away by a fall of rock from above, or possibly through an earthquake. But round the arched window it is still perfect, covered chiefly with figures of the Buddha. Over the porch there was once a music gallery which must have



BACK VII W OF SEATED GIRL

CAVE I

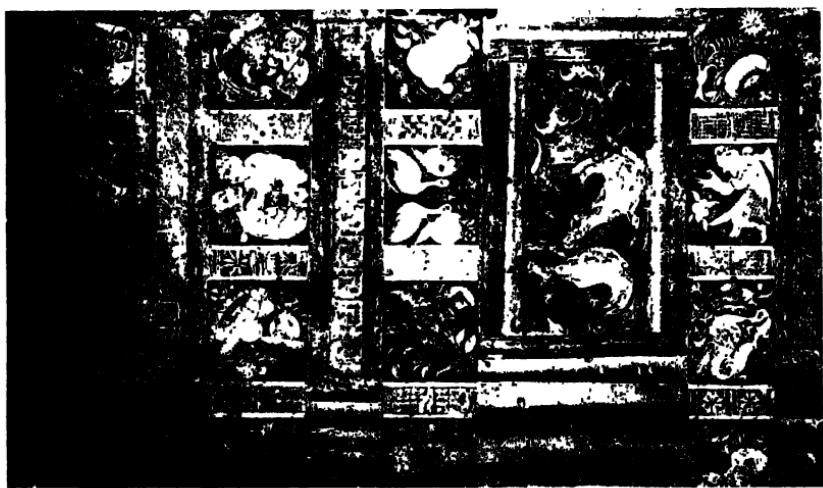
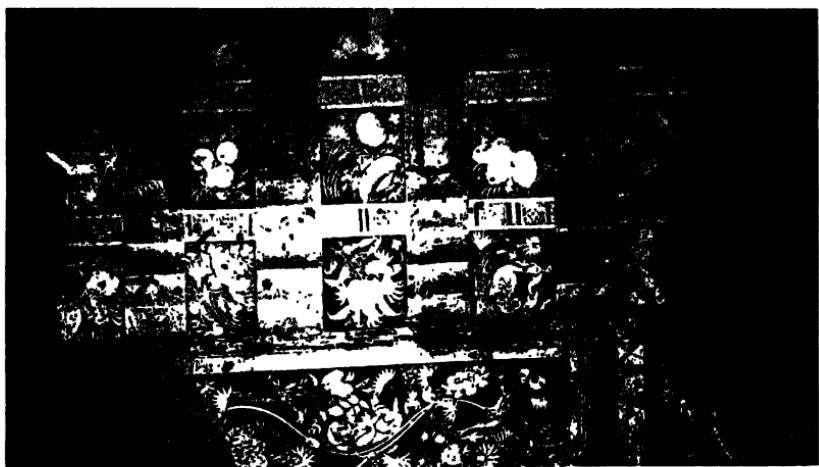
From a cartoon history by Miss Dorothy Farher



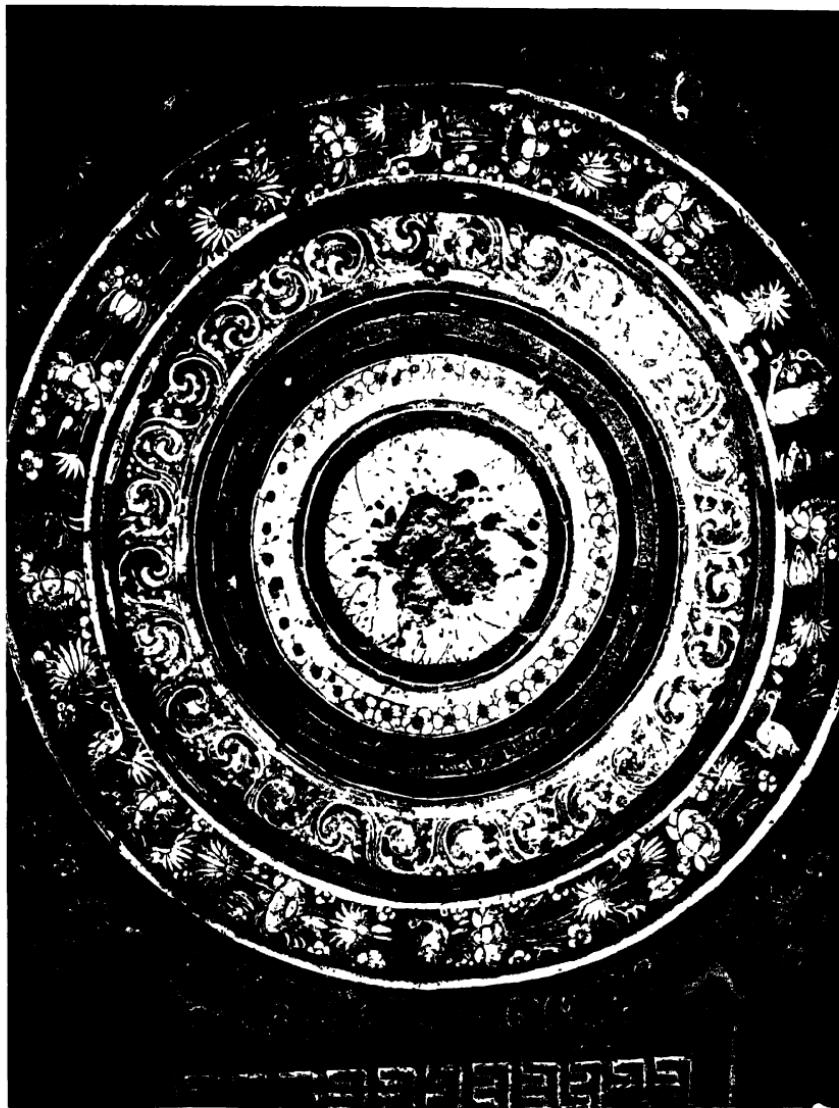
A PALACE SCENE, KING AND QUEEN CONVERSING

CAVE I

By permission of the Royal India Society

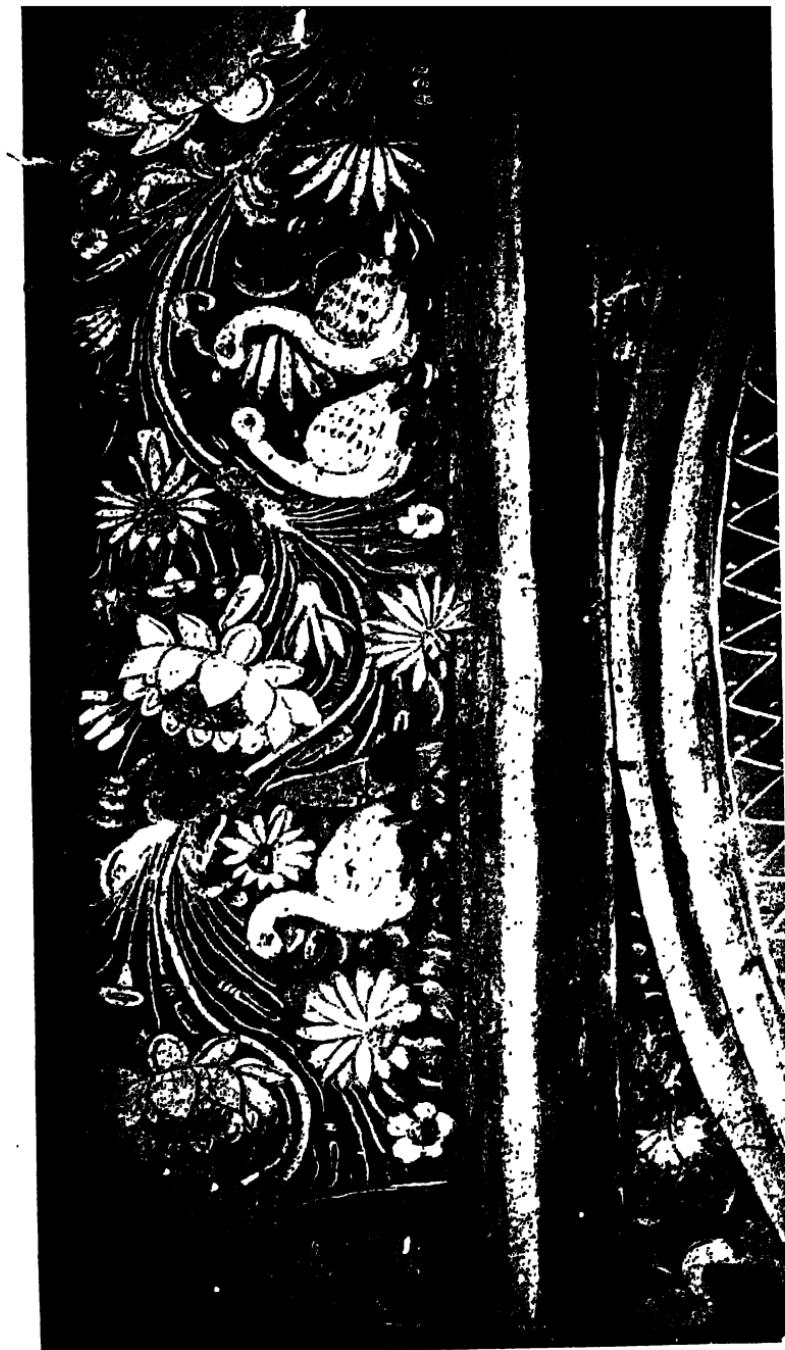


CEILING FRESCO
CAVE I



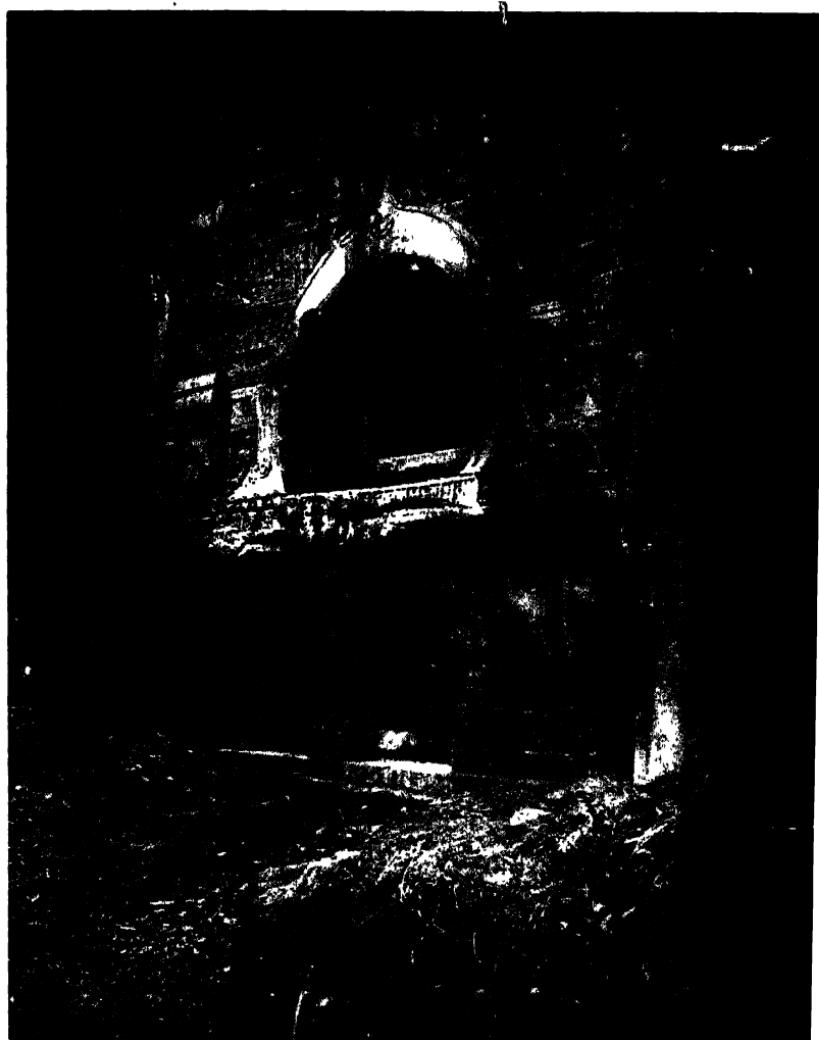
PAINTED CEILING OF SHRINE

Cave 1

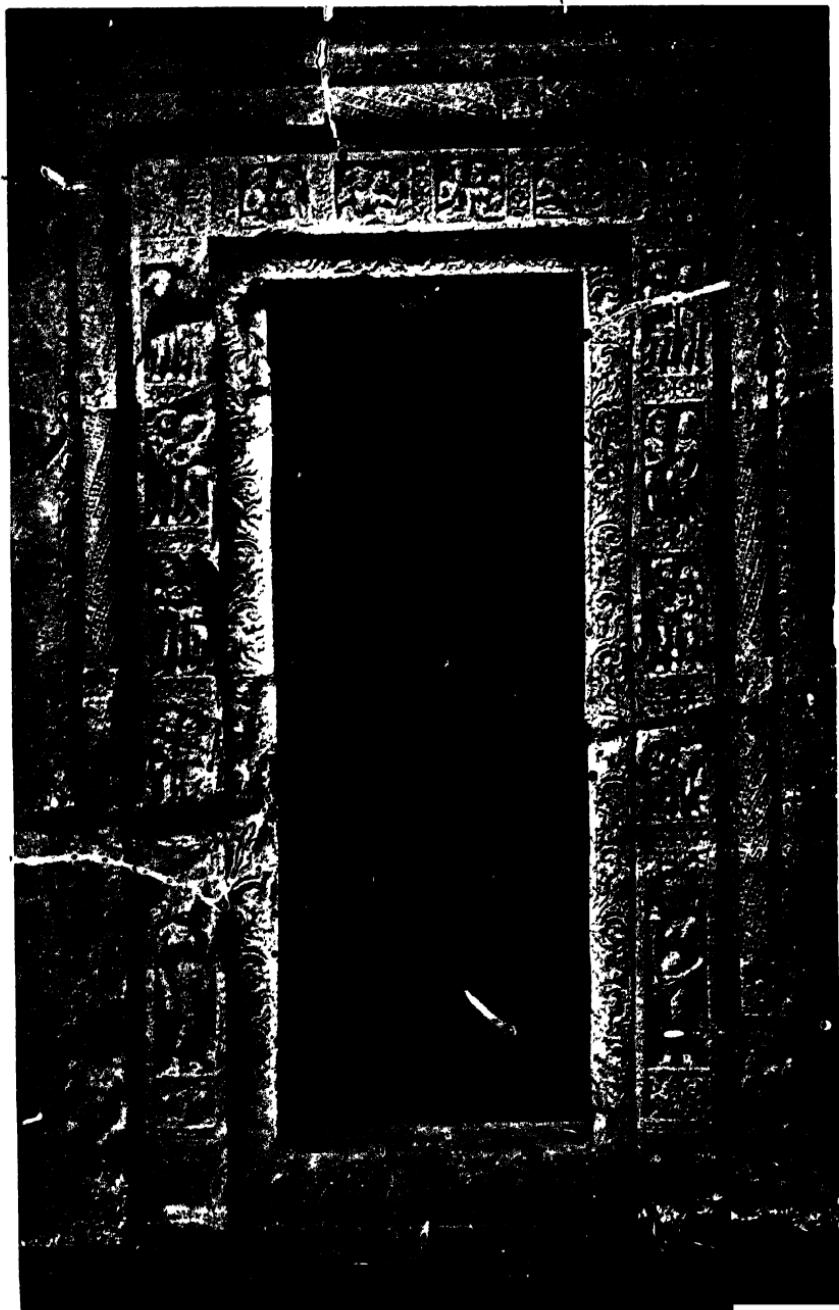


PAINTED PANEL IN CEILING OF SHRINE

CAVE 1



FACADE OF CHAITYA CAVE 26



DOOR INTO THE RIGHT AISLE OF CAVE 26

extended the whole way across, although this is most unusual in the temples at Ajanta.

This magnificent chaitya is larger than Cave 19. In



THE TEMPTATION OF THE BUDDHA

length it is nearly sixty-eight feet, in breadth thirty-six feet, and in height thirty-one feet from the centre of the cave to the roof. As in other caves, the stone roof gives the imitation of wooden structure. Twenty-six pillars surround the cave, and run round the stupa at the back,

richly and delicately carved in the style of the columns of cave 2. Images of the Buddha are placed in an exquisite shrine and along the walls where the monks, students and novices stood together in prayer. In the centre of the stupa the Buddha sits on a throne, with lions upholding the seat, and his feet resting on a lotus borne by two small figures of Snake-Kings.

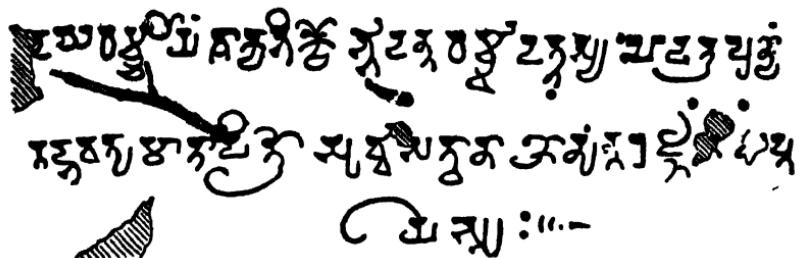
The aisle walls, instead of being painted, were covered with huge sculptures, among which is a beautiful figure of the dying Buddha, more than twenty-three feet long, reminding one of a fifth-century image. It seems that portraying a great subject in so huge a piece of single stone was no more difficult to these artists than carving upon wax. The cot on which the figure of the Buddha lies, the pillow at his head and the water pot by his side are just such as can be found anywhere today in India and Ceylon. Above and below the dying Master are hundreds of natural-size figures of sorrow-stricken monks and disciples grieving over the Nirvana of the Buddha. This is a large and superb piece of sculpture with hardly an equal.

On the left side of the cave is another huge bas-relief representing the temptation of the Buddha by Mara, the Evil One, such as is painted in cave 1.

Here, in this last group of caves, including number 26, sculpture takes a more prominent place than painting, and it always happens that painting appears much earlier than sculpture.

A very great many inscriptions are found in this rock-temple. On the front is a string of praises of the Sugatas or Buddhists and of Bhabiraja, the minister of Asmakaraja, and of his son Devaraja, who constructed the temple. Then, over the right side door are twenty-seven lines in early Sanskrit verse, which, with the

exception of flaws in the first and in some of the lower lines, is fairly legible. The alphabet is similar to that used in vihara cave 17.



L. 1. Deyadharmaoyam Śākyabhikṣorbhahadanta Dhārmmadattasya yadatra punyom
 L. 2. tadbhavatumātpitro survvasatvāñcānuttarajnenevāpt
 L. 3. aye stu : ||

INSCRIPTION FROM CAVE 26

This inscription may be translated in the following way :—

‘This is a gift of Shakya Bhikshu Bhadanta Dharmadatta. May the merit to be obtained by this act belong to the parents and be a source of supreme knowledge to all beings.’

Some of the inscriptions in translation read like

‘This temple is established for the welfare (of people) in a hill, tuneful with the notes of various birds, and whose caves are filled with the sounds of cow-tails (*chauris*) . . . and which is inhabited by the Yogisvaras . . . The same being Acharya aggrieved over the anxiety of the people regarding the *Sugata* . . .’

And one on a plinth under the feet of a tall standing Buddha on the left of the façade reads :—

‘This Shakya Bhikshu, the Bhadanta Gunakara’s meritorious gift, may bring whatever merit there is in this world for the attainment of supreme knowledge by all sentient beings, mother and father being first.’

And again : ' The smallest virtue resulting in good cannot be attained while engaged in worldly affairs. The result of the actions of sages who are exalted by virtue tends to the enjoyment of happiness by the people.'

This chaitya-temple was one of the last executed caves at Ajanta, and elaborate work was expended upon it in order to give it weight and grandeur.

On the left of 26 is the last accessible vihara, number 27. The whole front is broken away, with huge rocks on the ground blocking the entrance, and so making a comfortable home for jungle animals.

It measures about forty-four feet wide and thirty-one feet long, but has never been finished. Inside are a few cells. It has no pillars. Next to this, high up in the scarp of the rock, a fifth chaitya had been begun, but was never finished. It is now known as cave 28, and lies high up in the hill between caves 21 and 22.

Number 29 is the last in the western hill, just as number 1 is the last in the eastern hill. It is inaccessible ; only part of its veranda was ever completed.

I had made over twelve large copies from the wall-paintings, and still I wished I could stay there much longer ; but I felt that, even if I could stay many more years in the caves of Ajanta, I should not be able to accomplish all that I wished to do.

Towards the end of December 1919 I left the caves for Pahur. I felt rather sad and lonely as I saw the bullock cart with my belongings slowly preceding me. Through the gorge, the mountains rose beside my track. Monkeys chattered in the trees and peacocks screamed just as they had done when I first arrived there. The Banjarni village women moved gracefully along the road singing, and I set out for the caves of Bagh.

Chapter Thirteen

MY PILGRIMAGE TO BAGH

In the sub-continent of India there are several places where magnificent wall-paintings on rock are still in existence. Besides the famous Ajanta frescoes we find fragments of wall-painting in the caves of Ellora and Badami in the Deccan. We also get some very good specimens in the Bagh caves in Gwalior State, in the district of Malwa, Central India—over two hundred and fifty miles due north of Ajanta. Paintings have been found in a cave near Hoshangabad and in the Ramgarh Hills in the Central Provinces. Paintings of men, a woman, a horse and an elephant are in existence at Dehgaposhi, some hundred miles south of Chaibasa, Singhbhum district. This place is locally known as *Sita-Bahinji* in Keonjhargarh State in Orissa. There are some wonderful, though not so well known, wall-paintings in a cave at Sittanavasal, about thirteen miles from the town of Pudukkottai in South India, as also in a few cave-temples round about that town. Ancient paintings on walls still remain in profusion in various Hindu temples all over South India, particularly at Tanjore, Madura and Rameswaram. In the evergreen island of Ceylon there are marvellous paintings on Sigiria rock and in a rock-cut cave, *Gala-Vihara*, several brick temples and other buildings used as viharas at Pollonaruwa.

Ajanta and Sigiria are well known, by repute at least, to the world and Bagh, though less known, contains specimens of painting which, although fewer in number, are much maturer and more perfect in technique than

the night's rest. Temple bells in the distance rang out for the evening service, and women blew on their conch-shells to announce the approach of night. Everything fell quiet and sombre as the deep blue night stole on.

Now appeared clusters of houses with a red flame light here and there at windows and doors, and a passenger or two left the bus as he reached the neighbourhood of his dwelling. The sky above grew heavy with stars while down below the trees full of glow-worms exhibited their rounded forms along the roadside.

A peculiar smell of something burning roused me to look across the fields, and I saw flames jumping up and down at irregular distances, and every time they sprang up they revealed to us in yet a fresh spot a group of villagers taking their ease around a smouldering heap of rubbish, the ashes from which would fertilize the field. At about eight or nine o'clock at night, away on the right, I saw the palace of the Raja of Dhar. Gorgeous guards with guns and spears were pacing to and fro along its walls and gates.

We drove through the quiet streets shaded by huge, grandfatherly banyan and peepul trees with knotted trunks and luxuriant foliage, where birds, monkeys and tiny creatures love to sleep and play. Then a few people began to pass us on the road and, at length, we reached the whitewashed dak-bungalow at Dhar. This was the capital of a Maratha State of the same name.

I descended, called for the chowkidar of the bungalow and, entering a room, asked for a hot bath and a good meal. But, as I began to prepare for a bath, I heard from the next room a discussion about me in the Bengali language. A little later I came upon three or four young gentlemen feasting on chicken curry and mutton

chops, which they, being caste Hindus, would not be allowed at home. Their presence rather mystified me until I learnt that these Bengalis were working at the Dhar Raja's estate, managing the estate affairs and working as teachers and in public services. They were interested to hear about my journey to Bagh, and one of them grew intensely excited and wanted to come with me, because near the caves is a lake in which for a long time he had cherished the ambition to fish. So now he would get a chance to catch fish while I worked in the caves. But in the end he was afraid to come, and all the others tried to dissuade me from undertaking the rather dangerous and uncertain expedition.

I heard that the mail *tanga*, which goes towards Bagh, left as soon as our bus arrived at Dhar and that I could have made the journey cheaply and in company. But now I would have to wait till the next night for the mail *tanga*. I was, however, anxious to be off the same night, so it was necessary for me to procure a *tanga*. A *jatra tamasha*, however, was taking place in the village. *Tamasha* means 'great fun' or 'show', and *jatra*, 'open-air drama'. To this entertainment all the men of the town had gone, and from it nothing could draw them away. But fortunately the Bengali gentleman, who was the Dhar Raja's manager, gave me a man to go with me to find some conveyance, and particularly mentioned the name of one *tanga* man who was well known as the last resource in emergency.

We knocked at a little mud hut till a woman woke up from her sleep, and jingling her bangles came to the door and told us that her husband was at some other place, and when we got there we found he had gone; however, at long last we tracked him to the *jatra*

48. *My Pilgrimages to Ajanta and Bagh*

performance where he sat quietly smoking and listening, in the middle of a great torch-lit crowd.

Many people here do not know anything about Bagh, but they know of a small town, Kukshi, farther on, twelve miles away from Bagh. Kukshi, however, is the nearest telegraph office from Bagh. This man arranged to take me about thirty miles to a village along the road to Kukshi for about thirty rupees.

Within an hour he came to the dak-bungalow and I got into the tanga, cushioned at the bottom with a pile of straw and dry hay, which the driver took for his two horses. We started off on the long road between big trees to Bagh. After passing the town of Dhar the land lay bare, except for a few small villages here and there, and stretched away indefinitely beneath the immense crowded sky, that throbbed with its load of orderly stars. Such country and space enriches the mind and broadens the soul. There was no sound or movement, nothing save an occasional howl of the jackal and the swift and cautious run of a fat-tailed fox across the road. My tanga-driver told me that a jackal or fox passing on the left side of a man while journeying brought him good luck. This superstition encouraged me, and wrapping the blanket closer round me, for the cold was of the kind that penetrates to one's bones, I fell asleep fearlessly.

Suddenly I woke up in the middle of a river to find the horses sturdily dragging us across, while the tanga bumped upon the rocky river bed. After this I dozed until there came a shout of ' Hai, hai, hai ! What are you doing at this hour of the night ? Where are you going ? ' and the tanga-man shouted back : ' Hi, what's the matter with you ? We're going to Bagh, Bagh, Kukshi.' Then the strangers said again : ' You can't

go there now, it's too late ; you must wait till morning.' I guessed what they were saying, so I grumbled and shouted. Then the two dark-looking men came near the tanga and I immediately flashed a torch-light on their faces, which dazzled them, but when they saw my topee and thick overcoat, they seemed astonished and a bit frightened, and slunk back into a thatched hut at the wayside. They may have been simple chowkidars or customs men, but I rather thought they had seen the mail tanga pass and were on the lookout to rob some stray traveller at that late hour of night. So we quickly whipped up the horses and I shouted ' *Jaldi chalo, jaldi chalo*' (go quickly), and escaped from there.

At dawn the tanga-man, the two horses and I were still trying to cast aside our sleepy weariness, when we came upon a large river-side village, which roused us into morning's natural activity. The people were washing right down at the water's edge and taking their time over the scrupulous cleaning of faces and teeth. Women, wading up to their knees and drawing up their skirts dipped their pitchers in the river. In the village were several small shops, and there the people who had travelled by the tanga which carried the mail were sitting idly, as their tanga-man had died that night and they could go no farther until the next day. But I wanted to get on to Bāgh and, after much inquiry, found a man, strong and big enough to frighten one, who was willing to drive me if I paid him well, for the man who had brought me there would go no farther.

Under the trees, as we went, were vermillion-painted stone gods and goddesses, put there by the Hindus. We drove swiftly to a village ten miles away, changed horses and drove on again. Now the land became moun-

tainous and wooded, the haunts of Koles and Khils, the aborigines of this province.

I had glimpses of roughly-built huts covered with twigs from the wild trees, and often caught sight of low carts with small, solid wheels, usual for the hilly countries, drawn by one bullock and laden with wood. Once I was amazed to see how a golden-coloured man and a woman walking beside a bullock cart exactly resembled the figures I had seen among the Ajanta frescoes in cave 10. The woman had a sharp nose and long, fine, arched eyebrows over lovely dark eyes, and the man's curly hair was encircled by a band of palm tree leaves and wild flowers of red *palasa*.

The road went winding up and up, and then dropped steeply; rise followed drop indefinitely. At length, as we cautiously came down a slope and reached the level ground, the tanga jerked and the horses moved backwards, for there, across the road, with the appearance as I thought at first of a crack in the parched ground, was a huge, brown, so-called double-faced snake, which had stopped in the middle of the road. I thought someone would kill it; but the driver clapped his hands, and shouted until the snake glided slowly out of the way into the jungle.

Down in the valley to which we now came flowed a rivulet, overhung by trees whose boughs met together, arch like. We got down and let loose the horses to drink, the tanga-driver ate his fried rice and corn, and I opened for myself a tin of preserved meat to eat with my last loaf of bread. After this short halt we proceeded again, and presently came up with a man walking with a little baggage and with a gun in his hand. I was interested in seeing a gun, and when I heard he wanted to reach Kukshi I invited him into the tanga. It was

pleasant to have a companion, especially one who could tell a good story. He said he always carried a gun to frighten the Bhils so that they might not shoot arrows at him. He told me that a few years ago one Bhil had been so outrageous in his daring that the Government offered a large sum of money to whoever would capture him, dead or alive. The reward tempted no one, but at length, quite by chance, an officer caught him by the hand, and, as he was wrenching himself free, cut off his hand, which he brought to the Governor, and received the reward, but never got the Bhil. The Bhils, he told me are extremely dexterous with their bows, for, seeing a traveller coming along the road, they will let fly an arrow and cut off a nose or ear without the man realizing from whence the arrow came. He, terrified, naturally enough, at this assault from an unseen enemy, is anxious to fly, and drops all the baggage he may be carrying. My companion entertained me with many such stories all the way to the next village, which we reached in the afternoon.

In this village—the name of which I have forgotten, but I rather think it was Sardarpur—very poor peasants lived in a row of ten or twelve mud houses, together with their pigs, calves, goats and donkeys. Some of the huts were also used as shops for selling ordinary food, burnt clay pottery and lacquer bangles. There was also a smithy with two tanga-horses waiting to be shod, and a tanner who sold skins for drums, bellows and water jugs. Looking at this village, one could imagine just how it must have been thousands of years ago.

I had the good fortune to find the mail tanga, kept back by its horses wanting new shoes. Two passengers were already seated ; I made the third, and we travelled on to Bagh again.

The afternoon soon passed, the sun was setting, the jagged scenery giving way to gentle green and damp forest land, when the tanga-man first began to mutter, 'Bagh is not very far now, not very far', and at last we arrived in the village surrounded by green vegetation. Bagh is about eight hundred and fifty feet above sea level, situated in a pleasant valley, extending three miles north and south by an average breadth of one mile, and at the foot of a low range of hills of the southern slope of the Vindhya ranges, about a hundred feet high, which form the western boundary. So fertile is it with banyan trees, papaya, mango, bamboo, sal and banana growing, that I was reminded of a Bengal village, and it was as startling to me to find the green valley plumped down right in the middle of such arid country as it is to the weary traveller in the desert suddenly to come upon an unknown oasis.

At length we drove up to a brick and stone structure, whitewashed, which stood up among rows of bamboo bushes. It was distinguished by the emblematic sign of the Hindu State of Gwalior: two fine black cobras enclosing a crude black outline drawing of the sun, with eyes, nose and mouth painted upon it: and, below, the inscription

BAGH INSPECTION BUNGALOW

written in the English, Devnagri and Urdu scripts. So, after a long non-stop journey from Mhow, through the town of Dhar and over the Tanda Ghats, having spent the whole night in the tanga, crossing fields, forests and a mountainous tract, not without peril from tigers, snakes and footpads, I had finally arrived at Bagh Inspection Bungalow. I entered, and ordered a meal and a bath, and while the bungalow chowkidar and his

wife cooked, although night was already coming on, I took the bungalow gardener with me and started off in the direction of the caves, so excited was I to catch just a glimpse of them before going to bed in peace.

We hastened along the road to the caves; two or three times I was carried on the broad back of the gardener across the Baghmati river. But we did not get as far as the caves, for night was already upon us, and my guide pointed out a low range of hills and said 'Yonder is the Panch-Pandu, but, Sahib, we must return, for snakes and tigers are already out'. The caves are known to people in general as the Bagh caves on account of the closeness to the village of Bagh but locally they are called 'Panch-Pandu', as the home of the five 'Pandava' brothers whose exploits are well known to the readers of the *Mahabharata*.

When I had returned to the bungalow I ate lentils and chapati (a kind of thin round bread) and went early to bed, feeling very happy indeed that I had at last reached Bagh.

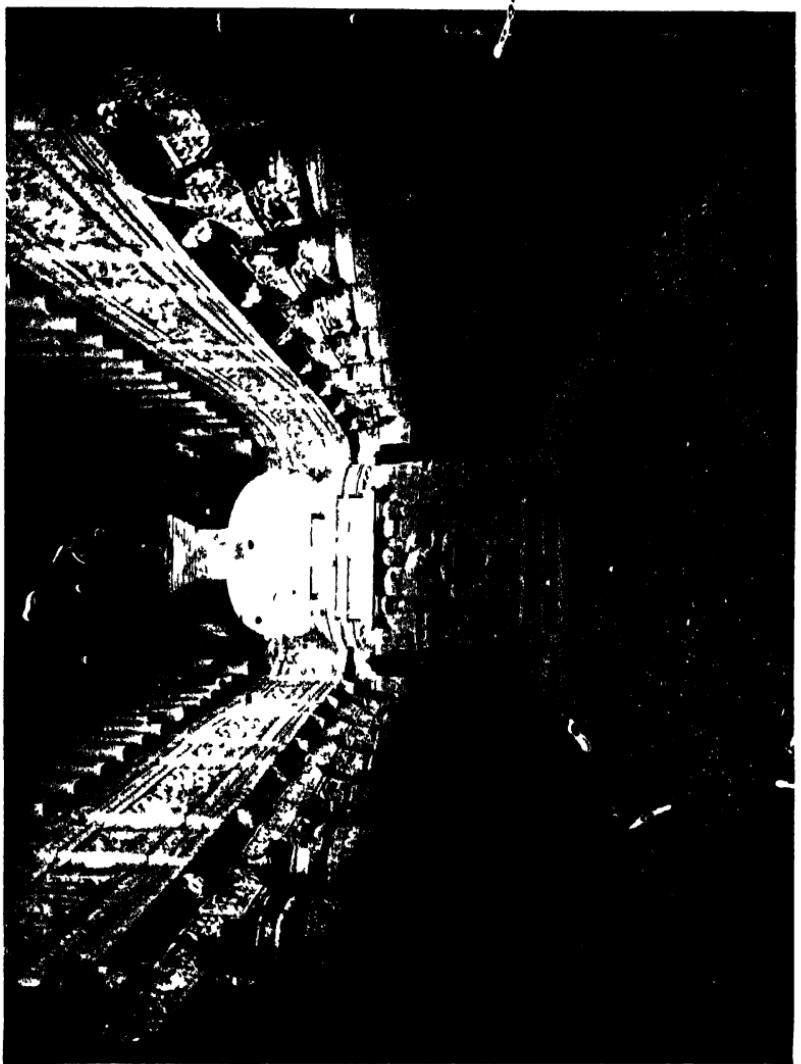
Chapter Fourteen

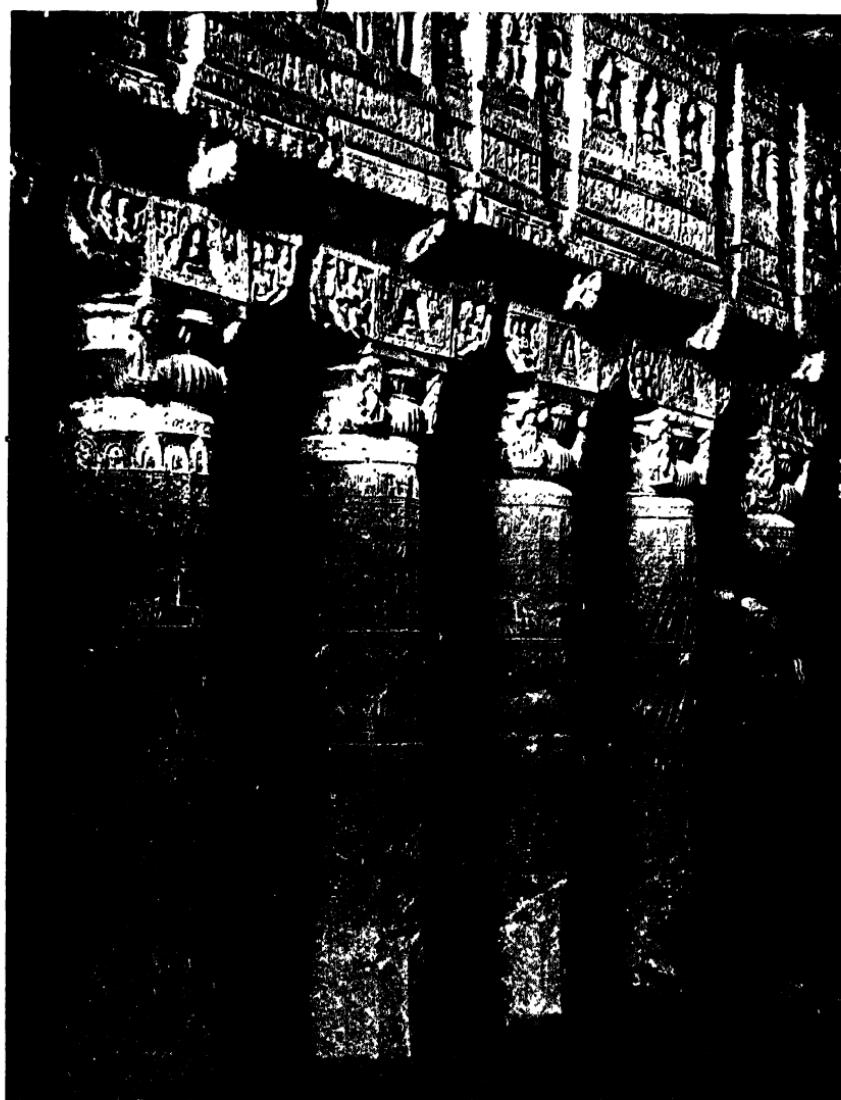
AT THE BAGH CAVES

THE next morning I woke up early and wanted to hire some men to go with me at once to the ~~caves~~, but the chowkidar told me that the coolies who are usually willing to do any work that is offered do not come out of their houses and look for work until rather late in the morning, and so, to pass away the time, I had a general look around.

The garden of the bungalow was full of *karavi*, *gandha-raj* and jasmine flowers that bloom so profusely in Bengal. I also found several Bengal fruits, such as mangoes, bales, papayas, custard apples and pomegranates.

To the right of the main road, on the top of the hill, was a ruined red stone and brick fort which was built by a Hindu king many years ago, to safeguard the village from invaders rushing in from the north or west. The ascent to it is by a small and very steep footpath. The whole village now contains four to five hundred houses, within the compass of a low mud and stone wall which runs round the northern and part of the western edges of this hill ; but it is said that in the olden days Bagh possessed between two and three thousand houses. Lying, as it does, on the great ancient road, which runs down from the north and passes through Ajanta on to the Deccan, and thence farther southwards, the village of Bagh was once, no doubt, of great importance, especially between Emperor Asoka's time (273-232 B.C.) and the seventh century A.D., when Buddhism in this western part of





PILLARS ON THE LEFT OF CAVE 26



IN FRONT OF THE BAGH CAVES, BY THE RIVER BAGHMATI



'PANCHI PANDU', THE MAIN CAVE IN THE BAGH HILLS



PEASANT WOMEN CARRYING MEALS TO THEIR MEN IN THE FIELDS



THE JUNGLE-VILLAGE NEAR BAGH, WHERE I SLEPT

India was at the height of its glory. Several local scholars professing this faith—Dharma-Rakhya, Gun-Bhadra, Paramartha, and Atigupta of Ujjain—visited China during the fifth and seventh centuries A.D. to exchange ideas and preach and study the Buddhist law, while the great Buddhist scholars and pilgrims from China, Yuan Chwang, Fa-Hien and Hsuan Fa, came to visit Central and Western India about the same time.

In the sixth, seventh and eighth centuries, however, Hun kings swarmed over Asia and crossed into Western India, fighting and bringing destruction wherever they went. Mussulman invasions were also continual, so that during the tenth to twelfth centuries A.D. Buddhism was driven out of India and utterly crushed and, consequently, the Bagh and all other cave-temples were deserted. Brahmanism now spread over the land, and since that time the people of Bagh and the villages around have nearly all been Hindus.

About five hundred years ago the ambition of the chiefs of the villages around Bagh to be lords of the land resulted in a quarter of a century of anarchy, in which Bagh was devastated and desolated. Then it arose once more to some importance when more than two hundred years ago it became the occasional residence of Jhasu Bomeah, a celebrated freebooter, who took possession of the Kotra district, and built for security the forts of Soosaree, Bagh and Kukshi.

Jhasu Bomeah became, by his bold depredations which extended not only into Malwa but even to the Deccan and Gujerat, so formidable as to excite the serious attention of the Marathā princes. He was besieged in the fort of Kukshi by a large army for forty days, at the end of which period, finding the place no

longer tenable, he made his escape to Bagh. To this last place he was pursued and was again besieged. Not being able to make a stand, he fled to the mountains, and after that nothing further of him came to be known. His country was divided among the conquerors, Bagh with its dependent villages falling to the share of the Malfaraja Scindia, in the eighteenth century, who used to manage it through a deputy ; later it became included in the Amjhera district of Gwalior State.

However, these cave-temples came to be known, some hundred years ago, as Bagh-Guha, the abode of tigers, and remained deserted ; and although the place today is well known to the neighbouring people for its burnt clay pottery and lacquer bangles, few of the natives of the place know that it is close to some great Buddhist shrines.

By about seven o'clock in the morning I could collect two men from the village and we started for the caves. Between the village and the caves—a distance of about four miles—is an open jungle track, very difficult to walk through with its dwarf cypress hedges, date bushes and *babli* looking like mimosa but full of thorns. *Nim* and *jambu* trees grew here and there along the banks of the boulder-strewn Baghmati river. The river meanders snake-like through the valley, and we had to cross it three or four times on our way to the caves. A few small villages were dotted about, consisting sometimes of only four or five huts, which are inhabited by the Koles, Bhils and other hairy, half-naked itinerant tribes who live by cultivating the land, shooting game with their primitive bows and arrows and chopping wood.

Before the advent of the Rajputs, the Bhils were the ruling race in Western India ; but about four hundred

years ago they became a despised, outcast, fierce people, who wandered apart from the rest of mankind. Today they are more peaceable and show less suspicion of civilization, but they are still like delightful children who do not want to work, but prefer rather to adorn their arms and legs with bangles and dance with all their might to the drum and cymbal.

To save themselves from starvation, however, these jungle people will sometimes condescend to do a little wage-earning work, and that must have been why I was able to coax half a dozen men who, with me, marched single file across the dry cotton fields, carrying my ladders, water jug, oil lamp, drinking water and drawing material. I found them extremely good to me during my stay at Bagh.

We presently saw far away before us a large deep square hole in the hillside through the dark green trees in front, and my companion said: 'That is "Gonsainji's Gumphā", which means the holy father's cave.' Then crossing the murmuring little rivulet two or three times, we came right up to the foot of the hill, and there, exactly in front of the caves, was running the same little Baghmati river in which the pilgrims used to wash their hands and feet before entering the sacred monasteries. Cypress bushes had grown thick here, and many kinds of trees, thick-leaved and shadowy, had stretched their roots luxuriantly down into the clear, cool, lovely water.

No water tank is to be found in the sandstone rock at Bagh as at Ajanta, and the other excavated caves of India, and this at first might seem a little strange; but since this river, just below the caves, flows for about nine months of the year, evidently it served as a water supply for the monks who, for the remaining three

months, could get almost perfectly-filtered water by digging into the sandy bed.

Immediately after crossing the river we came to a level plain, and then we climbed a flight of seventy rudely-formed stone steps which led to the sombre mouth of the caves, which we had seen from far away in the field. As I approached, I saw a wonderful sight : flocks of wild doves, green parrots, many monkeys and squirrels were collected round a nude, emaciated *sanyasi*, with long, unkempt hair and body rough and grey with ash dust, sitting cross-legged and immobile, a *yogi*, or holy man, known as Gonsai Babaji. His disciple had left his food, consisting of milk, sweetmeats and fruits in front of him, and the birds and monkeys were eating it, but as soon as they saw me the monkeys each picked up two crammed handfuls of the food, and swinging themselves up into the great *nim* trees and jumped from top to top, chattering, howling and whooping, and the birds reluctantly flew away.

Here in the jungles of Bagh there are, besides the tigers, old pythons, that leave their lairs at night to drink in the river Baghmati and then come through the sandy banks of the bushes above, in order to catch a goat or a buck for a meal, and every morning their fresh winding trails can be seen in the soft ground. If the villagers see a python gliding towards its victim they run to rescue the animal, but do not harm the snake, taking pity on and revering it because it has lived through many ages. They would not kill it, for fear of bad luck.

In the darkest hour of night one is startled to hear a drumming sound coming from the direction of the caves. Asking the *sanyasi babaji* why he beat the drum in the night, I got the reply : 'Tigers come to me for permission to go into the village to find food ; and I tell them Within

the boundary of my drum's beat you must not attack any living beings, but beyond that sound you are free to kill whomever you wish.'

The poor simple villagers gave this holy father sweet-meats and money because they looked upon him as the great protector of the villagers of Bagh. He remained day and night outside the entrance to the cave, but his predecessors had penetrated inside the cave and had ruined the wall-paintings with smoke and fire. The caves are under the strict supervision of the Archaeological Department of Gwalior State and the holy men are not now allowed to harm them..

The hill in which the caves have been excavated runs parallel to the little river Baghmati. The lower half is sloping, but steep ; the upper, perpendicular, composed entirely of horizontal strata of red sandstone and clay-stone alternating ; it is a peculiar rock, quite distinct from the volcanic rocks in the neighbourhood and was utilized for smelting iron until foreign competition killed the industry. The sandstone contains a large amount of clay, and is coloured with oxide of iron, varying from deep red to perfect white. With its colour vary also its hardness and the fineness of its grain ; the dark red is fine-grained and tolerably hard, the white is coarse-grained and so soft as to be able to be rubbed to pieces between the fingers. Different shades of the red sandstone occupy the upper part of the hill with thin layers of the clay-stone interposed.

The caves are in the centre of the hill, beginning at its steepest part. It is through the lower half of the caves, for about six feet from the floor, that the stratum of white sandstone runs ; this, however, reposes on the old red sandstone. The upper part of the caves is mostly formed of light red sandstone. It is no doubt owing to the

'absorbent and retentive power of this and the weight of the hill above, as well as the destructive effect of the rain water on it, that such 'immense flaky' masses of the roofs and verandas have fallen away.

The hill runs north-east and south-west, and the caves face north-west, so that never at any time does the interior portion receive full sunlight, but in the evening they are lit quite considerably by the rays of the setting sun. This is the case with almost all Indian cave excavations.

These caves are fully exposed, unfortunately, to weather of all kinds, as in many caves the verandas have broken away altogether ; the jungle has grown thickly in front, and boulders and debris have collected to a considerable height ; also for a long time the caves have been frequented by jungle animals. The villagers of the neighbourhood are afraid to enter the caves even in day-time. But in spite of all the perils, a fair is regularly held once a year in the winter, down by the river Baghmati.

The kings and rich people who had these caves excavated wanted to keep up the spirits of the artists who, used to a worldly life, were obliged to live, for a time, in such lonely surroundings ; they were naturally depressed and therefore unable to work their best, and so the fairs were arranged to be held, particularly throughout the whole of the winter. To this, villagers from far away came to buy and sell, dance, sing and make merry. The artists and sculptors were thus able to have a break in their work and relieve its monotony by m^{ing}ling, as they always had loved to do, with merry souls. These simple country folk provided the artists with wonderful subjects for their figure compositions.

There are about nine caves in all, excavated in the

cliff which rises between 150 to 200 feet from the river level. Their entire frontage extends more than 2,000 feet. Each of these caves is a vihara, and, curiously, there are no chaityas at this place. But one or two viharas are provided with chapels for worship, with stupas carved out in the back wall. The excavation of these rock-temples must have taken place between the fourth and seventh centuries A.D. Many of them have completely fallen down and are in a totally ruined condition.

Chapter Fifteen

A GENERAL DESCRIPTION OF THE BAGH CAVES

Not all the caves were excavated at the same time. About a thousand feet to the left of the main steps leading to cave 2 is a small vihara cave, most likely excavated after all the others. This cave is called 'Griha'. At the entrance to it, the portico or the veranda has unfortunately perished altogether; but as it is at one end, we shall call it number 1. There is a single entrance and no windows. The interior is an absolutely plain chamber, twenty-three feet wide by fourteen feet high, having no cells, ~~sanctuary, statue, painting,~~ and it was, therefore, a living room for the Bhikkhus. The four pillars on which the roof is supported might at any moment collapse, as they are much worn away and are in a most dilapidated condition.

On the way from this cave to the second cave on the right are signs of chisel cuts of the excavations in the face of the rock; but they are so blocked up with debris that it is very difficult to know whether they denote the actual remains of a cave or only the beginning of one. There is no inscription, however, in any of the caves at Bagh to suggest the date of the excavation or to show the names of the donors of the shrines.

Then we come to cave 2, excavated about the fifth century A.D., which is the main shrine and usually the first entered, being led up to by the flight of ancient stone steps. This is locally called the 'Gonsai-Gumpha', or 'Pandavonki-Gumpha', which can be seen from far off in the fields as a dark hole in the red

sandstone hill piercing the thick green trees. This is the most elaborate and well preserved rock-temple in the whole group. Outside the vihara is a small landing place overhung by the hill, which is more than one hundred and fifty feet in height. Evidently there was once a greatly decorated portico, supported by six octagonal pillars, but now they are in utter ruins. The plastered front and the fragments of wall and ceiling paintings have all been destroyed by smoke and fire, animals and vagaries of weather, and, no less, by the complete neglect in which this place remained for so long.

At each end of the veranda is a small recess ; that on the right contains a very modern figure of Ganesh, the Hindu god of luck, usurping the place of the earliest figure of the Buddha, which is known to have been here originally by the Buddhistic emblems of flying figures holding garlands.

This cave is especially interesting as combining both the vihara and chaitya ; for here, beside the cells for Bhikkhus, is found the object of worship, the stupa. Inside the cave one is impressed with its gloomy grandeur ; it is not, however, till one has been there for a few seconds, that one perceives its great extent. The light and air are admitted into the cave hall through three doors and two windows. The open area of this cave is a regular square, measuring eighty-four feet each side. Its height is fourteen and a half feet. The roof is supported by four ranges of massive pillars, the two centre ones being round.

Around the large cave hall are twenty small cells, each measuring nine feet in depth, with a separate door entrance towards the cave. There are seven of these cells to the right, six to the left, and four at the end of

the hall, two on each side of the recess. To the left of these small cell apartments, one perceives at about four feet from the ground in the opposite wall a small oblong excavation of about three feet by two ; creeping through this, one enters a small apartment of about twelve feet square, in the opposite wall of which is a similar excavation leading to a like apartment ; and so on successively for five small rooms, gradually ascending the hill, the floor of each inner apartment being on a level with the lower part of the entrance from the other one. These secret apartments appear originally either to have led or to have been intended to lead to the top of the hill, and to have been the private entrance ; or they may have been secret chambers for keeping the valuables and money. At present, however, they receive neither light nor air, except from the entrance to the first cell.

Passing between the centre range of columns to the end of the cave hall, one enters an oblong recess, measuring twenty feet by twelve, with an open front towards the cave hall supported by two hexagonal pillars. In niches, on the remaining three sides of this apartment, there are two grand standing images over eight feet in height by the side of the shrine door. One must be of a King, the pious donor of this vihara, and the other is also a Buddhist King or a Seth, a rich merchant, who probably induced and helped the King to excavate this cave-temple or contributed handsomely towards the expense. On the other two sides of this apartment, six figures, over life-size, are carved in bold relief—the Buddha and his disciples, three statues on each side of the walls of the vestibule. The Buddhas are about ten feet in height, each standing on a lotus flower with his right hand lifted in the *Varada-Mudra*—a gift-bestowing

pose— and the left hand holding the robe in front of his shoulder. The attendants hold fly-whisks in one hand and the other hand rests on the knot of their garments. All these eight stone carved figures are well preserved.

Traces of painted plasters are still to be found on some of the sculptures here. The little natural holes in the rock surface or a few accidental chisel-cut marks of the sculptors, were first filled in with lime, the bodies of the carved figures were covered with thin or thick plasters, according to the depth of the cuts, and then painted over with the colours of the flesh, garments, ornaments and whatever else was necessary, to give a smooth and realistic appearance to the figures. As a matter of fact, the whole of the rock surface was painted over with appropriate colours. This was an old custom all over India and it is still being practised, particularly in the temples in South India and Ceylon.

From the recess, one comes at the extreme back through a small doorway and enters an inner apartment, a chapel measuring twenty feet by seventeen in the centre of which, cut out of the solid rock, is a stupa for worship ; it is over fifteen feet high from the floor, and reaches almost to the ceiling. On the top of the plain round dome is a square relic-casket also carved in stone.

The paintings on the walls and ceilings have been badly damaged by the smoke and soot from the fires of the *sanyasis* who must have lived there for centuries. Many traces of paintings are still to be found on the dark walls and ceilings. If sufficient trouble is still taken, I am sure there would be scope to discover some new paintings unknown to the world. Those on the roof are chiefly beautiful decorative designs in square compartments of about one foot, containing pictures of elephants, bulls, birds, geese, fruits and flowers.

In all Buddhist Cave-temples, one often notices in most of the wall-paintings and stone-carvings—whether figure-compositions, or merely decorative and floral designs—various kinds of flowers, birds and animals. Almost in every instance the lotus amongst the flowers, the ducks and the geese amongst the birds, and the elephant amongst the animals are very much in evidence, and they seem to appear to be very common in all Buddhist art, treated with special favour by the artists of many generations and belonging to many groups, and even schools. All this is not without reason. The lotus, the duck and the elephant have each a special significance in art, and it is, therefore, necessary to discuss the subject while we are dealing with Indian art of any form.

The lotus is the flower which the poets have never tired of praising, for it is the best. White and beautiful and sweet-scented, it has been looked upon by artists and poets alike as symbolic of purity and virtue. Growing out of mud, and passing through dirt and a stage of thorn, it sees the light of heaven, looking the picture of purity and heavenly blessing like light itself. Its fragrance, like virtue, remains hidden, but the petals open one by one and it is released. There is then the bloom, and a spreading all around of a mingled sense of beauty, purity and joy.

The ducks and the geese are considered to be superior birds. They are said to be habitants of the Manasa Lake in the Himalayas, so often mentioned in the Puranic Literature of India. In Jataka stories of the previous births of the Buddha, we come across topics in which these birds have been mentioned. Migrating, when the season comes, from the Himalayan lakes, they live in the plains for a time, but return even as the holy men come to earth and return to their heavenly

home when their mission is accomplished. These birds dip in water, find food from the midst of mud, but are always free from dirt and are never wet. It is said that if they are given milk mixed with water, they can drink the milk leaving the water behind. This is interpreted to mean that they are like the devout souls who pick out truth from amongst the falsehood with which the world abounds. These birds have been symbolic of purity and wisdom, not only in Buddhist literature but also in the writings of still earlier time.

The elephant is considered to be the noblest amongst the animals. In size it is so large, but in manners gentle and quiet, and compared to its huge body it has little anger. The elephant is a clean animal. It draws water with the trunk, but will pour it into the mouth for a drink only if it is wholesome. It is also a kind-hearted animal. It would not trample even an ant. Like a devout soul it has toleration and kindness. It has no crudeness in the lines of its shape ; indeed, it is beautiful. It is symbolic of grandeur and majesty, nobleness and gentleness and has, therefore, a place of importance in Indian art and literature.

It is, however, significant that the likeness of the cat or the camel among the animals, or any rose amongst the flowers depicted, do not appear either in the paintings or sculptures or carvings. The explanation seems to be that of these, the rose was probably not in existence in India at that time, and as regards the animals they were not considered to be quite clean by the artists and designers.

In Buddhist sculptures and paintings one often comes across *darpanas* (mirrors) in the hands of kings, queens, and other female figures, either holding them or looking into them. In ancient India the *darpana* was very

frequently used for many different purposes by peoples of all stages of society. They were made of a kind of white metal, brass or copper, and the sizes made according to various requirements. We still use the *darpana* : at weddings the bridegroom carries it in his hand to the bride's home as part of the ritual.

Our artists used to get the natural sunlight right inside the caves by reflecting the sun through several such mirrors, wherever the light was necessary for their work in the dark caves. Thus the cave interiors were flooded with good bright light during any part of the day. I also used to do the same thing at Ajanta and Bagh by using my modern mirror ; and a large sheet of drawing paper pinned on a board served the purpose of a reflector. Thus I could direct sufficient sunlight right on to the frescoes where I copied.

Leaving the second and proceeding southward about thirty paces, by a narrow ledge round a projecting part of the hill, one reaches a third cave. Between these two caves chisel marks are visible on the wall, as though excavations had been begun and not fully carried out. In front of this cave there was a large *nim* tree, whose spreading branches screened the entrance. This vihara is known locally as the 'Hathi-Khana', or the stable for elephants. It was also very elaborately designed and carved, and high finish has been given to the ceilings of the halls, cells and the frontage of the cave. It is most likely that it was excavated for the accommodation of the superior members of the Bhikkhus, high priests and the guests. The front of the cave has not had a veranda ; but only the façade, the lower part of which has broken away, is smoothly chiselled, and carved with the tigers' heads between the usual stupa emblems of the Buddhist caves.

This cave is sixty feet by forty, and fifteen feet high ; it is quite plain in its design, and has been plastered for painting. One first enters a hall twenty-eight feet square with six supporting octagonal pillars. Four cells lead from the right side. Some of these cells also had paintings on the walls. There are many different chambers connected with two main halls. The walls, pillars, ceilings, and the passages had all been decorated with paintings and the whole of this cave-temple might have been a wonderfully painted hall if it had been completed. There are still traces of a number of paintings and some beautiful figures of the Buddha on its walls attended by kneeling worshippers in bold and pleasing style. At the back of the cave, opposite the main entrance, three doors lead to a hall about thirty-nine feet square with two rows of four broad square pillars. The interior of this inner cave was not finished and has been left in a rough-hewn state. The total length of the cave-temple from front to back is about one hundred and thirty feet and the average height about sixteen feet.

Leaving the third cave, and returning by the same road, you descend the stone stairs and proceed southward along the bottom of the hill for about a hundred yards, and then re-ascend by a rugged steep footpath, to the fourth cave. Steps originally led from the stream below up to this cave. It is the largest cave of the series here, and it is in line with its neighbour vihara cave 5. The entire front of these two caves, which stretched continuously over two hundred and twenty feet in length, with its roof and all have fallen away. It was once supported on twenty massive pillars fourteen feet in height. This vihara is still locally called 'Rang-Mahal' which means 'hall of colours'. The interior

of this hall is about ninety-four feet square and the roof is held by thirty-eight pillars. Its design is very much like cave 2, but is a little bigger. It was indeed a great picture gallery. It is a most remarkable cave in many respects, well lit and spacious, and the wall-paintings it contains are the highest achievements in the world of art of that time. They were probably executed during the fifth and sixth centuries A.D. Such magnificence is unrivalled and unequalled in any vihara discovered so far.

The first object noticed on approaching the cave is a colossal figure of the Buddha, which can be seen through the trees, cut in relief on the face of the rock a few yards to the left of the veranda ; it is in an arched niche about thirteen feet high. The Buddha is represented in the preaching attitude : the left arm has an ornament on it ; the right side is worn away. An open makara's mouth is behind the head and a riband lies on the shoulders ; above the head of the figure are the remains of a stupa with a triple umbrella and the usual flying garland-bearers at the side of it.

A few yards farther on, just round the corner, is a little recess containing two figures seated close together on a bench, the cobra's hood over the right one denoting that it is probably a Naga-King. The walls are painted with eight rows of seated figures of the Buddhas ; over these, within an archway, are the remains of another seated figure of the Buddha, having the *chakra*, or praying wheel, beneath him between two antelope heads, and flying garland-bearers above. This recess borders on the pilaster which is connected with the colonnade of the veranda. It is more handsome and much richer than the one at the opposite end. The veranda is fourteen feet wide throughout its length,



CONNIE'S GUMPIA'S ENTRANCE TO CAVE 2, BAGH



CAVE 7, BAGH

SHOWING HOW THE WHOLE VERANDA HAS FALLEN IN FRONT OF THE ENTRANCE



PADMAPANI BUDDHA

CAVE 2, BAGH

Copy by Sanjiv Kachhadourian

PLATE LII

and ten feet high. From the portions of it which have not fallen in, the roof appears to have been painted with flowers and other decorative patterns. The back wall has been plastered and painted continuously through its whole length in double rows, one above the other ; portions of the upper one only remain, and even these are scribbled over with names and foolish inscriptions perpetrated by visitors.

The cave itself has three entrances and two windows nearly as big as the doors. The main door is exceedingly handsome and well finished, the other two are also fine. It is fifteen feet high and eight feet broad, gradually receding into nine feet by six. The cornice of the door is ornamented with a row of nine figures of the Buddha in different positions and a miniature stupa at each end. The frieze has nine heads of the Buddha, and the architrave a flowered scroll, which passes down the inner pilasters. The consoles bear a graceful female figure with one hand resting on a child's head, both standing within the open mouth of a river-dragon—*makara*.

The other doors have much the same ornamental designs. The windows are nearly square and have holes on the inside for wooden shutters and the bar to fasten and shut them. The cave, despite its three doors and two windows, is quite dark and it is almost impossible to make one's way into it without a light. Bats, snakes, and panthers used to inhabit it, undisturbed for centuries.

The hall possesses a most unusual arrangement of columns, which was most likely a necessary construction required by the weakness of the roof. Twenty-eight pillars, twelve feet high, support the roof and form the aisles. They are square at the base and change to octagons and then polygons as they rise, returning to octagons at the summit. Those at the rear are

plain octagons which were once painted on their inner sides with figures of the Buddha ; but these figures have now almost vanished.

Within this circle of pillars are eight cylindrical columns arranged in pairs. They are carved and once bore a frieze, decorated with figures and heads of the Buddha carved out of stone. In the extreme centre are four-based pillars about twenty-two feet high. It is evident that they were inserted after the cave had been excavated, for they consist of sandstone blocks.

The sandstone was too soft and unsuitable for sculpture, so that, except for a little carving on the front pillars, its place has been supplied by the kindred art, painting. The whole cave is covered with plaster, showing that it must once have been profusely decorated with paintings ; but the frescoes now remaining are so utterly ruined that soon they will all vanish. Seventeen cells surround the hall ; but three more were evidently intended to be excavated on the right-hand side.

We pass on to cave 5. Although this cave is sharing a veranda with cave 4, it is separated internally by a partition wall, thirty-six feet thick. At the right-hand end of the veranda are a pilaster and a cell. The pilaster is not so elaborate as that at the left-hand end, and the cell does not contain any colossal statue of the Buddha, but four small figures of the Buddha are cut into the face of the rock between this cave and cave 6.

Cave 5 was evidently, from its shape and arrangement, a lecture hall or refectory. Local people call it 'Patha-Shala'. It is a parallelogram about ninety-six feet by forty-three ; it has no aisles, cells, stupa or image, and is perfectly plain and without any ornament, though it has been plastered and seems to have been

covered once with frescoes similar to those in cave 4. Two rows of pillars, about six feet apart and twelve feet from the walls, stretch lengthways down the centre. They are very peculiar. The shafts are round, smooth and unornamented throughout, and spring from the floor without any pedestal. A small astragal, six inches from the top, which would have been a torus if properly placed, is the only ornament. Four windows and a door open directly outward and light the cave.



WALL DECORATION, CAVE 4, BAGH

There are five cells in this cave, three in the rear and two on the farthest side and opposite to the entrance of the lecture hall ; they are larger than usual and probably designed as residences for the Arhats or instructors. A rough ground-red plaster covers the walls.

A door at the front right-hand side of the hall leads into a small chamber, which in turn leads into cave 6 evidently intended as a living room only. It has no veranda, a door and two windows opening direct to the air. It is about forty-eight feet square and has four small cells in addition to the shrine. Six pillars once supported the roof, but they have all fallen. The wall

are plastered and a few relics of wall-paintings can still be found.

Cave 7 lies about fifteen yards farther on. It is a facsimile of cave 2 in arrangement, size and detail. It is about eighty-six feet square and has twenty pillars and twenty cells. However, it is in such a ruined condition that it is difficult to enter it. There are signs of painting on its walls and pillars.

Cave 8 is connected with cave 7 by a small cell, but both this cave and cave 9 are in such a state of dilapidation that it is impossible to enter either of them.

Chapter Sixteen

END OF THE PILGRIMAGE

THE four miles from the village of Bagh to the caves were too far to travel every day and would have involved the loss of too much time, so I threw in my lot with a family living within a mile from the caves. I got a bed of sorts and my meals consisted of *chapati*, milk and eggs. From this village I used to set out with my coolies daily for the caves in the early morning and return home on the fall of evening.

The best frescoes are to be found in cave 4, but unfortunately they are fully exposed to the weather, as the veranda has broken away altogether. Now the Gwalior Archaeological Department have had the debris removed, and the approach to the caves is no longer so difficult as it was when I first visited them.

In the past these caves were terribly neglected. But they are now being cleaned and chowkidars are kept at the place to look after them. The rocks being of a variety softer than those at Ajanta and Ellora, the damage to these caves is mainly due to moisture percolating through the soft sandstone during the rains.

I made copies of some of the more interesting paintings. There are figure groups of various kinds, depicting probably the incidents in the life of an ancient king, who became a Buddhist and gave the money for this hall. There is, however, a great single masterpiece of a continuous large painting over sixty feet long, the figures on it being all about life-size or even over life-size.

There is a complete absence of primitive static stiffness in the dynamic movement of any of the figures. In this

great painting, first we find a queen grieving over some secret sorrow surrounded by maidens in a palace chamber, and two blue pigeons cooing to one another perched above on the top of the roof. On the right the king with the prince behind him is holding a discussion with another king and a prince, who has apparently just embraced the Buddhist religion. They have no crowns on their heads. At the back are visible the dark green trees of the palace gardens. Next to this, on the upper part, there are seven figures of flying angels, Bhikkhus and monks, and down below are to be seen portions of some beautiful figures of musicians, the lower parts of which have all vanished.

In the next part is a wonderful group of beautiful, half-nude dancing girls, led by two foreign-looking young men, gaily dressed with silken *panjabis* and wearing most becoming wigs on their heads ; they were probably some very special dancers in the Indian King's court ; it seems a somewhat frivolous subject for a Buddhist monastery, but it is full of life and movement. They are all inside a private palace garden enclosed by the palace wall. Over this garden wall, nobles and Rajas with their men on horseback are all looking at this great dancing party. There are some twenty figures on horseback painted in this scene. Then follows the royal procession of elephants carrying queens and their attendants and female musicians through the palace and city gates. The elephants are painted most boldly and their serenity of movement, their massive grandeur and nobility of attitude are brought out with great care and loving devotion. I do not think there are any better pictures of elephants anywhere in the world. Connected with this mural painting, scenes of an Indian forest home on the wooded river bank are to be seen ;

they all give us a glimpse of a bygone civilization, the product of a fine culture. The whole of this group is a piece of magnificent painting, indeed very precious, and should be well preserved at any cost. (See Plate LVI.)

Nowhere in the world perhaps have artists practised such complete self-abnegation as in these ancient Buddhist cave-temples, which are full of masterpieces, but on none of them appears the artist's or sculptor's name or dates. The kings gave the orders and the artists created wonders. Very rarely are the names of their employers found either. Once or twice, somewhere on a wall, or on a statue, the name of the endower appears, but never of their artists ; and this is so during the whole period of Buddhist art all over India and Ceylon.

Of the later ages, however, on the works left by Ravi-Das's disciples in Rajputana and by other later artists, or on the miniatures of the Mughal period, signatures of artists may be found. But the ancient artists found reward in the works they produced, and there was no hankering for marketing their products, no running after name or fame.

In the frescoes at Ajanta and Bagh, one suddenly comes across in the palace scenes, a few foreign figures, especially Persians, singular in their dress, complexion and type of head. For instance, at Bagh is depicted the reception of two foreign-looking nobles at the court of an Indian king. So in a wall-painting at Ajanta, foreign-looking dancing girls and maids fill the wine cups and hand them to the king and queen. The kings of ancient India liked to have around them servants with cultivated urbane manners and they employed slaves imported from so highly civilized a country as Persia. These servants and dancers were also used

when the kings entertained noble guests from other parts of the world.

I had the opportunity of studying the methods of the wall-paintings at Ajanta so closely, that I found that the Bagh paintings, though most perfect and precious to us for all time to come, were not really quite finished paintings. I felt that the impression of completeness was deceptive in them. If one looks carefully and thinks coolly one can easily reconstruct how the paintings were done. The artists first sketched their subjects on cloth, probably with charcoal or soft red sandstone, called *geri-mati*. This was invariably done by the master of the group, while other artists transferred the composition to the wall and sketched in the outline with Indian-red and brush. After that, the master corrected the final drawings of the whole composition. Sometimes perhaps the master demonstrated the perfect drawing with brush and water only over the defective drawings. After this, they gradually modelled the figures in the round with yellow-ochre. Then came the full colours and tone and modelling over the whole painting. Once more, on top of all, another outline. The highest lights, the deepest shades, and the most delicate touches of colour were then applied, and finally the 'lamp-black' was used for details such as eyebrows, hair and the finest lines necessary to bring out the whole painting. The last finishing colour of black is, however, completely absent from the Bagh paintings.

I have two theories to advance to account for the unfinished state of the Bagh paintings: first, that they were abandoned when it was discovered that these hills, formed as they were of soft sandstone, were unsuitable for a permanent Buddhist monastery; or secondly, that during the fifth century A.D. one of the Hun kings of



AT THE RANG-MAHAL
CAVE, BAGH



PHOTOGRAPH OF FRESCO IN THE RANG-MAHAL
CAVE, BAGH



A GROUP OF LENINIAN DANCERS

LENIN

LENIN. MARCH 1918. PROLETARIAN DANCE



A GROUP OF MUSICIANS

CAVE 4, BHU

Observe the Musical Instruments, the Figures.



HIPPOLYTE PROCESSION

1. 1850

Western India, foiled in his ambition to become a Buddhist Emperor, destroyed more than sixteen thousand Buddhist stupas, monuments and monasteries in disappointment and in revenge for being mocked at by the priests. This would also explain why such temples as these cave-temples, with their wonderful living quarters, schools and art galleries, should have been deserted. Due to frequent invasions, the true worshippers with the artists disappeared from the land, but by good fortune the cave-temples, being surrounded by jungles, escaped total destruction from the various invaders.

The hillside at Bagh has crumbled away considerably, and was therefore so dangerous that, even while excavating, the monks found the roof needed great support, and so piled up rocks to form extra columns. The frailty of the walls and ceilings is shown by the constant fall of earth and stone from above, that takes place whenever even a monkey jumps over them. The whole year round a continual wearing away of the frescoes is going on. First, the hot sun bleaches them and then torrential rain washes over them. After the monsoon different kinds of moss begin to grow all around the walls. An additional peril for the remains of the frescoes is that they are subject to bombardment at the hands of the shepherd boys in the jungles, who let fly stones from their catapults in order to see if any wild animals rush out of the caves.

The art of the sculpture and fresco painting of the caves at Ajanta, Bagh, Sittanavasal in India and in Ceylon is a very rare and precious heritage. It is sacred and precious alike for its own artistic merit and as a record of India's great ancient civilization. These remains of paintings and other works of art speak of devotion and culture and indefatigable labour

through many centuries by generations of artists of the highest order. They are unique not merely in production and execution, but also in conception and spirit. We have hardly any equal of these in rhythmic composition, character of design and high technique, although they were executed many hundreds of years ago. The exquisite beauty of the human figures, singular in expression of feeling and motion through forms and colour, and refined actions and movements, seem to proclaim in their silent manner the greatness of their creators not only as artists but also as people who had reached a very high stage of devotion. The secret of their great art was in their wholehearted recognition of the spiritual element in man and in their love of nature around them. They were so very human, these great masters, they neglected nothing, but gave expression to all aesthetic feelings and emotions of the human heart.

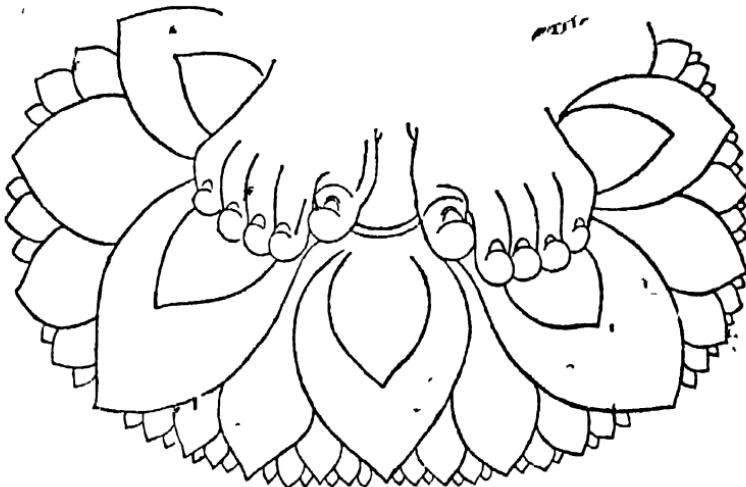
The time for my departure arrived for I had finished my copies of the frescoes. One day, standing in front of the caves, I wondered who should have our grateful thanks for what still survives of the paintings. Man has neglected these treasures in his ignorance of their greatness, and many of those who had taken the trouble of visiting these caves left marks of their destructive fingers on the paintings. Nature's process of destruction has gone on with merciless certainty, but even nature with her ruthless claws seems to have been particularly kind with these works of art, for she left sufficient specimens in a tolerable state of preservation, although time's ravages have been at work for over a thousand years. Something has been done to save the remains from further destruction by the efforts of the Gwalior State Archaeological Department. But there is room for

more effort to keep the sculptures from crumbling and the paintings from fading. There are also well-developed scientific processes by which high-class photographic reproductions in colours of these works of art in their actual size may be prepared with every detail before they are completely gone. Albums of coloured collotype copies of the artistic treasures in the various caves would be invaluable gifts to the civilized world. Loose sheets of these reproductions would be highly welcome to any people of taste and would take the place of cheap worthless oleographs in decorating the house.

The Medici Society of London have reproduced the Old Masters of Europe, and they have brought joy to many. It is sad to reflect that though we have been in close contact with European civilization for many years past yet even today in India we have not many printers experienced in the modern process of art reproduction nor any up-to-date equipment or printing press which can bring out such reproductions.

May I venture to suggest here, that to get a perfect knowledge of these monumental treasures of art which have been so vigorously executed in these rock-cut caves and temples all over India and Ceylon, unequalled till this day, opportunities should be afforded by the Governments and the States to the advanced art students by establishing regular seats of art and culture directly at the foot of the Ajanta and Bagh caves for painting, at Ellora and the famous South Indian temples for sculptures, and at Sigiria, Pollonaruwa and Anuradhapura in Ceylon for both, as was done at our ancient Universities I believe that by this way only our old heritage of fine arts could be properly revived and our future generations of artists could once more build a great school of painting and sculpture.

I close this chapter with an earnest hope that with the dawn of a new era the attention of the Government of India will soon be directed towards the perfect ~~expression~~ of human life. For the tree of civilization can only be judged by the fruits of its art and craft products.



THE BUDDHA'S FEET RESTING ON LOTUS FLOWERS

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